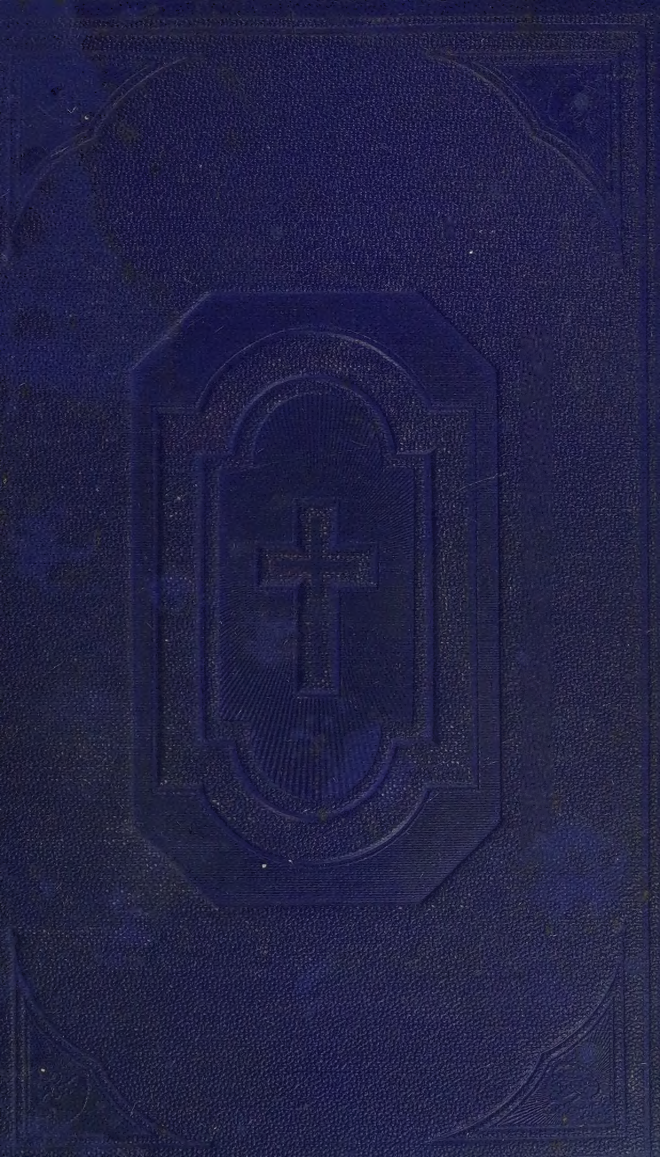

EASTER

IN

BY

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REV. F. X. WENINGER, D. D., S. J.,
In the Clerk's office of the District Court of the United States,
for the Southern District of Ohio.

TO

JESUS AND MARY,

AND ALL THE

BLESSED IN HEAVEN,

THESE PAGES ARE DEDICATED

WITH THE

LONGING DESIRE TO MEET

THEM SOON.

acc.15075

PREFACE.

THIRTY YEARS ago, when entering the Society of Jesus, I wrote down some thoughts on the joys of the Blessed in Heaven.

I sealed the manuscript, and, after so many years, on opening it again, I discovered some scintillations of past meditations.

With these, aided by the breath of the Spirit of God, I have lighted a torch, and looked to Heaven; and what I saw there, this book will tell you.

Dear reader! pray for yourself and for me; that the reading of these contemplations may raise you higher in the glory of Heaven; and that you may there meet the Author, with the jubilant acclamation: Yea, Father! Heaven is such as you have written, and infinitely more.

THE AUTHOR.

CINCINNATI, Holy Saturday, 1863.

INTRODUCTION.

We see now through a glass in a dark manner; but then face to face.—1 Cor., xiii: 12.

In writing my thoughts on the joys of Heaven, I have a three-fold object in view, viz., to induce pious souls to think oftener on Heaven, to increase in their hearts the desire of Heaven, and to strengthen their will to do and to suffer all things that may tend to conduct them to that blessed home, and to secure the highest possible place in the ranks of the triumphant Church of Christ.

This subject is the more deserving of attention, and the more necessary to be treated, as

we learn from experience that there are few, alas! very few, even of our so-called pious Christians, who meditate on Heaven. When they undertake to do so, they pretend that they can find very little to think of in that subject, and that they find very few reflections to influence their minds or hearts for the sanctification of their lives. Solomon said, even in his own time, that there was no end to the writing of books. How much more applicable is this saying to our time, which may truly be called the age of books; and yet, of all the books ever written, how few do treat of the joys of Heaven? Even those that profess to treat of them, say but very little concerning their nature or extent, and what they do say is not presented in any definite order.

Struck with surprise, we ask: Does man, then, know so very little concerning the joys of Heaven? Is it absolutely necessary to be a St. John the Evangelist, and see Heaven with our own eyes, as he did? or must we be translated, like St. Paul, to the third Heaven, in order to contemplate the fullness of bliss there enjoyed by the Blessed?

I do not think so; on the contrary, I am convinced that there is no subject more suitable for contemplation—no subject so consoling to think of, and so well adapted to strengthen and encourage us in the way of Christian perfection, as the joys of Heaven. "*Sursum corda*—lift up your hearts to Heaven"—such is the daily exhortation of the holy Church during the Mass, by the mouth of the officiating priest; and the people answer, by the clerk, "We have them lifted up to the Lord." This daily exhortation of our holy Mother the Church, shows, on the one hand, how desirous the Church is that we should every day, and throughout the day, elevate our hearts to God; and, on the other hand, that this elevation, or the contemplation of heavenly things, is a mark of her true children. For ourselves, we shall not find it difficult to inspire our hearts with this heavenly desire, and raise them to heavenly things, if we only follow the advice of St. Paul, and compare the joys of Heaven with those of the just on earth. As Heaven is the kingdom of joy, all that is real joy on earth must necessarily be there, not as here, indeed,

but in some other higher, more perfect and infinitely happier way, corresponding with the fullness of divine beatitude.

Wherefore the Apostle says, that we now see the things of God darkly, as in a mirror; and it is the object of contemplation to imagine, by what we know as real joy on earth, the ineffable joy that awaits us in the kingdom of our heavenly Father. What I am about to say in this connection is, in one sense, nothing more than a mere subjective contemplation; but, in another sense, it is not simply fiction, since every one of the joys I shall contemplate is a real joy in God, and, consequently, in Heaven, not, as I said before, in the actual way, as I shall describe it, but in a manner infinitely higher and more perfect than human intellect could conceive, or human language represent.

In order to represent the joys of Heaven as clearly and methodically as possible, I shall contemplate a blessed soul leaving Purgatory and entering Heaven, there to celebrate Easter for ever and ever in the company of all the saints and angels. Easter is the solemn and triumphant commemoration of the Resurrection

of Christ, and of his victory over Death and Hell; it is, consequently, a solemn pledge of our own resurrection and triumph with Christ, and the everlasting festival of Heaven itself.

Who ever celebrated Easter, in the spirit of the Church, without feeling in his heart a superhuman joy, differing entirely from the joys of earth, as he listened to the Alleluias which the Church intones on Holy Saturday? That the ecclesiastical rite, with which the Church celebrates the commemoration of Easter, must have some relation to the joy of Heaven, seems to follow, naturally, from the intimate connection existing between the militant Church on earth and the triumphant Church in Heaven. Why, then, should I not develop and represent my conception of the joys of Heaven, by following the order of the rites established by our holy Mother the Church for that great day?

The ceremonies of Holy Saturday are the ceremonies of Easter itself—that is to say, the hours from midnight till Sunday morning, during which time the Resurrection took place. The Church celebrates the Paschal solemnities on Saturday, being the day previous, because

the ceremonies were apparently too long and too fatiguing for the night.

I consider these Easter solemnities celebrated by the Church on Holy Saturday as the most becoming, and, also, the most appropriate starting-point for a meditation on the joys of Heaven, and, at the same time, the most sublime and the most fruitful field of comparison. Of this you will, I hope, soon be convinced, if you follow my meditations on the ceremonies of that holy time.

I.

THE BLESSING OF THE NEW FIRE.

The sacred fire is kindled; lo! on high,
  Freed from its flinty bosom glides the flame:
Emblem most fit,—pointing to yonder sky,
  Whose beauteous mansions all our longings claim.
God of all blessings, oh! do thou impart
Its genial light and glow to our cold heart.

The first ceremony of the Church on Holy Saturday, announcing the festival of Easter, is the kindling of the new fire, and the blessing thereof. This fire is produced from stones by striking them, and upon this blessed fire the incense, for the blessing of the great Easter candle, is laid by the priest.

Consider, now, a soul leaving Purgatory and soaring aloft towards the starry firmament of Heaven. What she sees during this ascent is like the mystical sparkling of the heavenly joy she is approaching. I am justified in imagining the purified soul passing the starry firmament, because the Church herself, on the festival of Christ's Ascension,—which was the model of ours,—sings: "Thou, who ascendest above the stars!"

Assuredly, the sensations experienced during that ascent must be those of new and inconceivable delight. Who, that has ever seen an aeronaut ascending in a balloon, has not felt his heart expand, participating, to some extent, in the pleasurable emotions of him, who is thus mounting towards the sky, looking down from that lofty height on the grand panorama of earthly beauty spread beneath? How much greater would be the pleasure of that ascent, if it were entirely free from danger, and presented a view of the entire globe? And, if the person so ascending were a pious soul, how she would feel herself excited to sing the praise of Him, at whose almighty word this beautiful

world sprang into existence. She would chant, with a joy never known on earth, the "Benedicite," inviting all creatures, the sun, moon and stars, all the elements, the angels and men, earth and Heaven, to sing with her the praises of God. And as the song of the lark rings louder and clearer the higher he rises in the blue ether, so the more intense would be the joy, and the louder the praise, of a person thus ascending. And so, also, then, but infinitely greater, is the joy and delight of a purified soul delivered from Purgatory and on its way to Heaven. Persons ascending from the earth some thousands of feet, are oppressed by the rarefying of the air, and, on account of the distance, almost lose sight of things below; they are, moreover, haunted by the continual sense of danger, and must come down after a while. Not so with the ascending soul; she has fulfilled her mission on earth, and is on her way to Heaven, her eternal home, free from all danger. Her joy is every moment increased by the wonders she beholds, cheered on by the consciousness that all is hers, and that more and still more is yet to come. On and on she wings

her way through the measureless fields of air, and the starry host that gems the firmament of Heaven!

Here it may be asked, what I think of the stars and planets. I think, God has made them to glorify Himself by a material creation of so much grandeur and sublimity; I think, they are so many luminous palisades and high altars, placed by Nature, as it were, to decorate in a fitting manner the avenues leading to the gates of Heaven.

According to a rule of esthetics, every thing grand and beautiful requires an introduction. The tastefully-adorned, and carefully-cultivated country, lying immediately round an imperial city, forms, so to speak, an introduction to it. When we journey in a strange country, we can easily tell by the beautiful gardens and fine houses, as well as by the lamps stationed along the way, that we are approaching a great city. May we not expect, then, that God, the eternal standard of all beauty, would, in a similar manner, introduce the grandeur and magnificence of the heavenly Jerusalem, by the splendor of the stars, and their wonderful

arrangement? We may, at least, imagine such a possibility.

What astronomy tells us of the stars, excites, even now, our wonder and admiration. What shall be the soul's astonishment and delight, when the glory and magnificence of those celestial regions open before her, as the veil is now removed which partially hides them from mortal eye! Imagination is powerful, indeed, in conceiving ideas of material beauty and grandeur, judging, of course, by what is beautiful and grand in the works of Nature here on earth;—witness the Thousand and One Nights of the Arabians—but who can imagine or conceive what wonders, in the order of material creation, God, the essential Beauty and Omnipotence, can produce, and has produced, to adorn these avenues to his heavenly palace? What joy for that blessed soul, as she wings her flight through that world of wonders, and sees from afar the dazzling splendor that surrounds the Everlasting Portals!

When a stone falls from a great height, its downward motion is accelerated more and more, in proportion as it nears the ground, the cer ter

and of its natural attraction: so, in like manner, but in an inverse ratio, does the glorious ascent of the blessed soul increase in swiftness, as she approaches that Heaven, for which she was created, and where eternal rest awaits her.

At length, she draws near the radiant gates of the heavenly Jerusalem. Imagination can not form even a faint idea of the magnificence of those gates, of the hight and splendor of the walls, which extend on either side, built of precious jewels and stones, those glorious ramparts of the City of God. On the summit of the lofty portals the most Holy Name of JESUS shines resplendent, with the sacred emblem of the Cross, the sign of hope to man.

We read of the Queen of Saba, that, seeing the riches of Solomon, and the splendor of his dwelling in Jerusalem, she was lost in wonder. How, then, must the blessed soul feel on seeing, for the first time, the exterior glory and magnificence of the heavenly Jerusalem!

"Alleluia!" "Alleluia!" is her first exclamation as the gate of Heaven breaks on her view. "Open your gates, Princes of Heaven!"

exclaims the guardian angel of that blessed soul, "an heir of Heaven approaches!"—"Who is this heir of Heaven?" answers the angelic chorus from within. The guardian angel gives the name, and the gates of Heaven open. "Blessed are they that wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb; that they may have a right to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates into the city."—Apoc., xxii: 14. St. John says, "the *gates* or doors." We may, then, imagine that there are three doors in the heavenly portal; in honor of the most Holy Trinity.

II.

LUMEN CHRISTI!

In darkness groped the saddened sons of men:
The joys of earth sighed, like soft music's wail;
The sages strove to cheer,—yet, strove in vain
To draw from human eye the misty vail;
Till, in God's time, the cloud was swept away;
The Gentile saw afar the gladdening ray,—
Forsook his home to watch the ominous sky,
He sought, he found the Day-spring from on high.

Lumen Christi!—the light of Christ! so sings the deacon, entering the Church with the newly-blessed light, on Holy Saturday. *Lumen Christi!* sings the guardian angel, entering the first celestial door with his blessed charge, and seeing the light of glory beginning

to shine on that purified soul! *Deo Gratias!* —thanks be to God! answers the soul, chiming in with many angelic voices, as she tastes, for the first time, the beatitude and joy of the inhabitants of Heaven.

She arrives at the second door, and, with a higher, fuller, and more solemn voice, the guardian angel sings a second time, *Lumen Christi!* and brighter yet shines the glory of Heaven on the blessed soul, and more ecstatic grows her joy, as she responds again, with a still greater number of the angelic host, "*Deo Gratias*!—thanks be to God!"

She reaches the third door, and louder yet, and more solemnly, sings the guardian angel, for the third time, "*Lumen Christi!*" The blessed soul enters Heaven, and the full radiance of heavenly glory is diffused over and around her, and the full measure of her eternal bliss is completed! This light of glory is that whereof the Scripture says: "In thy Light, we shall see the light."—Ps., xxxv: 10. This is the light which enables us to see God in his essence, and contemplate Him face to face. This is the light of which Scripture further

says: "God is light, and there is no darkness in Him;" this is the light which, penetrating our very substance, makes us the glorified children of God. This is the light which makes us see, and know all things in God—it is the ever-burning flame of Heaven's Easter-joy. "*Deo Gratias!*—thanks be to God!" exclaims the soul, united to God by this light of Glory; and countless myriads of angels sing, with her, the praises of God. The perfume of thanksgiving goes up, like precious incense, in the sight of Him that sitteth upon the throne, from the heart of a ransomed and glorified soul.

III.

THE EXULTET.

Raise high the song of praise, join your glad voices,
Ye choirs angelic, all the earth rejoices.
The light of glory now dispels our gloom—
Triumphant bursts the Saviour from the tomb:
O'er mortal ken His light immortal pours—
The great Light increate. O, ye that dwell
Where, prostrate, each created spirit adores,
Exulting sing His triumph over Death and Hell.

After the third *Lumen Christi*, the Church, on Holy Saturday, offers the Paschal candle; the deacon, vested in white, sings the *Exultet* of the Church militant.

The blessed soul intones, in Heaven, the *Exultet* of the Church Triumphant:

"*Exultet jam angelica turba cœlorum.*" May the multitude of angels, whom I see in such resplendent glory, rejoice with me. May they thank and praise the Lord for the victory of the King of Glory, whom I now see, in power and majesty, at the right of His heavenly Father! May they thank with me the infinite mercy of God, who hath chosen me, without any merit of mine, to join the ranks of the Blessed. May they praise Him who hath now admitted me to the realms of Glory! Let me, O holy angels! unite with you, throughout the endless ages of Eternity, in giving honor and praise to the Most High, through Jesus Christ, who, with Him and the Holy Ghost, reigneth for ever and ever. "Amen!"

Then, inviting the angels, she sings alternately with them: "The Lord be with you," she intones; "and with thy spirit," reply the angels and the multitudes of saints. "Raise your hearts on high," says the soul. "We have raised them to the Lord," answer the heavenly choirs. "Let us give thanks to the Lord our God." "It is meet and just," is the glad and solemn response. Thereupon, the soul begins

the Canticle of eternal Redemption: "Verily, it is meet and just that, with you, I thank, from the depths of my heart, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost,—the Most Holy and Adorable Trinity,—whom, with you, I now see face to face, in everlasting glory! I am the heir of eternal beatitude; my title is secured for all Eternity! Alleluia! Hail! brethren and sisters in Christ, ye ransomed children of Adam! He, whose wounds I now see radiant in glory, hath taken away from us the guilt of our first father, the common inheritance of all his sinful posterity!"

"Such, then, is the joy of the heavenly Easter —that joy which neither eye hath seen, nor ear heard, nor human heart conceived on earth. Such is the fulfillment of Easter-joy, of which I, as a child of the true Church, had already such a foretaste on earth, that it thrilled and pervaded my whole being. I am the heir of eternal blessedness, ransomed at a great price. Alleluia! This is the day which the Lord hath made; let us rejoice, and give praise to Him! This is the day, which was pre-figured by that on which Christ rose victoriously from the

tomb! This is the triumphant joy, into which all those have entered whom I here behold around me, who have all, like myself, passed through the trials and tribulations of earthly life, and followed to the end, with holy confidence, the luminous pillar of Faith! What had it profited me to have been born, if I had not been permitted to share in the joys of this heavenly Easter! O wonderful mercy, and incomparable goodness of Divine Love! how shall I give thanks sufficient throughout Eternity! Oh! God of all bounty! to glorify me, thy poor sinful servant, Thou didst sacrifice Thine only begotten Son; and to redeem me, a fallen creature, Thou didst deliver Him to an ignominious death! O sin of Adam, that wast blotted out by the Life, Sufferings and Death of Christ! O most happy transgression, that didst obtain for us such a Redeemer, and such a glory! This is, also, the thrice-happy and eternally pre-ordained day, on which it is given me to exclaim, from the depth of my grateful heart: Alleluia! I am saved—I have won the race! I have fought the good fight —I am saved!!! The night of my weary

mortal life is changed into the day of everlasting joy! This is the day, of which the Scriptures said: 'That day shall be for thee a day of Jubilee.' This is the day on which I first see myself free from every stain of sin, and secure from all temptation. This is the day on which sorrow is changed into joy unceasing; after so many hard contests and fierce struggles, I have reached at last the goal of eternal rest."

"Receive, then, O heavenly Father! as the incense of thanksgiving, this my canticle of praise, which I now sing in unison with all the angels and saints, and which I shall for ever sing before the throne of Thy mercy! I offer this, my first heavenly thanksgiving, for Thy greater glory, and that of my dear Saviour and His Blessed Mother; nay, also, for the greater glory and joy of all the angels and saints, who thank Thee, with me, for my salvation. I offer it, likewise, for the Church Militant and suffering; and, most of all, for whomsoever I am obliged to pray, because I am indebted to them for having gained Heaven, and saved my soul, through Christ our Lord, who, with

Thee and the Holy Ghost, liveth and reigneth for ever and ever." "Amen! Alleluia!" answer all the heavenly hosts and all the choirs of saints; and the blessed soul is received into their glorious ranks—a citizen of the new Jerusalem.

IV.

THE SPLENDOR OF THE CITY OF GOD, AS THE SANCTUARY OF THE HOLY OF HOLIES.

There floats immortal mind, redeemed from sin,
'Mid splendors never grasped by finite power.
And griefs of earth, and evils of the flesh,
And tears, that oft from worried bosoms gushed,
And all the pangs by sinking hopes portrayed—
Are banished thence; the blissful Peace of God
For aye inwraps, in ecstasy sublime,
The chosen sons of the "Bride of the Lamb."

The blessed soul has sung her *Exultet*. She begins to look around on the glory and magnificence of the celestial world. "I see the good things of the Lord in the land of the living!"

—Ps., xxvi: 13—she exclaims, enraptured. The very entrance into Heaven had far exceeded all her expectations; how wonderfully, then, does her admiration increase on beholding its interior splendor!

When God created the visible world, he spoke his Omnipotent Fiat; and with what nameless beauty did He adorn the terrestrial Paradise! of that beauty, indeed, we can have no conception. How many persons, taking a view of Rome, of Naples or Constantinople, on a balmy evening in Spring, joyfully exclaim: "If earth be so beautiful, what must Heaven be!" But if this visible world, which surrounds us—with the curse of God resting upon it—still retains so much beauty and magnificence, what must be the beauty and magnificence of Heaven—that ever-blessed portion of creation!

God once said: "Let light be made!" and light was made; and the canopy of Heaven was spread out, and studded in a moment with innumerable stars. But those stars shall, one day, vanish away; they belong to a universe, which is only a shadow of that blessed

and everlasting creation, which our Almighty Father has produced for the enduring happiness and reward of His true children. He, the infinite Beauty and Beatitude, the essential Love, said in His Omnipotence: "Let Heaven be made for the everlasting contentment of all the rational creatures, I have made to my own image and likeness;" and the heavens came forth from nothing in all their beauty, and filled nine immeasurable regions of space, each one higher and more beautiful than the other. "Let light be made!" said the Almighty, and immediately the light of glory appeared, and illuminated those wonderful mansions prepared for His children of predilection.

Man himself has been able to add to the beauty of Nature, by the astonishing power of Art. But how insignificant are all the so-called wonders of the world compared with the wonders of this heavenly creation! What were the gardens of Queen Semiramis to those of the heavenly Paradise? the pillars of Hercules to the pillars that support the boundless vaults of the nine Heavens? the Colossus of Rhodes to

their stupendous dimensions? What, again, is the light of the tower of Pharos compared with the Light of Glory? what are the walls of Babylon compared with the walls of the heavenly Jerusalem, composed as they are of dazzling jewels? What is the golden palace of Nero, compared with the mansions of the Blessed in Heaven?

Now, the blessed soul beholds the City of God, the new Jerusalem, which St. John the Evangelist thus describes: "And I, John, saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem; and the building of the wall was of jasper-stone; but the city itself, pure gold, like to clear glass; and the foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation, jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a calcedony; the fourth, an emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. And the twelve gates are twelve pearls, one to each; and every several gate was of one several pearl; and the street of the city was

pure gold, as it were transparent glass. And I heard a great voice from the throne, saying: 'Behold the tabernacle of God with men; and he will dwell with them; and they shall be his people; and God himself with them shall be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and death shall be no more; nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more; for the former things are passed away.' And he who sat on the throne, said: 'Behold, I make all things new.' And he said to me: 'Write, for these things are most faithful and true.' And he said to me: 'It is done; I am alpha and omega; the beginning and the end. To him that thirsteth, I will give of the fountain of the waters of life, gratis. He that shall overcome, shall possess these things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.'"—Apoc., xxi: 3–7.

The Scripture calls Heaven, the kingdom of joy, for in Heaven all is joy,—overflowing, never-failing, all-satiating, joy.

Once, when the mother of St. Agnes was praying and weeping at the tomb of her martyred child, her daughter appeared to her and

said: "Mother, do not weep, for I am in the fullness of joy."

It is true, there will be different degrees of joy in Heaven, according to the different measure of grace, and the different degrees of merit and predilection. "There is a light of the sun," says St. Paul, "and another of the moon, and others of the different stars; the one exceeding the others in brightness."—1 Cor., xv. 41. A similar difference will be observed amongst the Blessed in Heaven. The brightest glory will be that of Jesus; the next, that of the Blessed Virgin; and so will all the angels and saints shine as so many brilliant stars, according to their different vocation on earth, and their different degrees of merit.

The measure of joy will, indeed, be different, but not that of contentment. Put a thousand glasses standing together, and fill them up till each one is overflowing. If these glasses be of a different size, how could there be in every glass the same quantity of liquor; yet, were the glasses conscious of their state, none of them could possibly desire more, since each one is already filled to overflowing. In a

similar way it is, that all the Blessed admitted into the kingdom of Heaven, and entering into the joy of their Lord, are filled to repletion with that ecstatic joy, and can not possibly desire more.

The soul enters into the company and communion of all the angels and saints, communicating to them her joy and glory, and receiving from them, according to her capacity, the fullness of their bliss. I will give you a comparison: Suppose a light placed in the midst of a number of mirrors: this light would appear equally and at the same time in every one of the mirrors. So, in Heaven, every blessed soul shall be a light, and a mirror communicating its joy to all, and reflecting their joy as its own. How this communion of joy increases the happiness of the blessed soul, we shall best understand by considering her entrance into that glorious company.

V.

THE ENTRANCE OF THE BLESSED SOUL INTO THE COMMUNION OF THE HOLY ANGELS.

The myriad beauties who shall sing,
That fill with harmonies divine
The courts of the Eternal King?
Splendor in them, and grace combine
To perfect all the grand design,
Which from creative Will doth flow:
Spirit, intelligence, love, power
Upon them did Jehovah shower;
In streams that set the Seraphim aglow.

St. Paul says: "You have come to Mount Sion, and to the company of many thousands of angels."—Heb., xii: 22. The mind of man, in his mortal state, shall never imagine the spiritual beauty and glory of an Angel. The

angels are the wonders of God's creation, in the order of spirits; they stand much higher than man in natural perfection. They were the first blossoms of the heavenly creation. If the lowest of those blessed spirits were to appear in this visible world, we could see nought else but himself alone; even the light of the sun would grow dim, and disappear in the surpassing splendor of that celestial being; and were the angel to communicate his beatitude to us, we could not receive it and live.

There are countless myriads of angels, distinguished by different degrees of perfection, in the order of nature and of grace. They are divided into nine choirs, over these, again, seven angels of the highest perfection preside, who stand before the throne of God. These nine choirs are: the Angels, the Archangels, the Principalities, the Virtues, the Powers, the Dominations, the Thrones, the Cherubim, and the Seraphim. The names of the seven highest Angels are: Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Uriel, Scathiel, Sarahiel, and Tehudiel. The names of the four last are only known by tradition.

The blessed soul enters this heavenly Society, and her joy and glory increase, in proportion as she rises higher amongst the holy angels, who open their ranks to receive her, and communicate to her their glory and beatitude.

The first Angel, who salutes and embraces her, is her Angel guardian. What a consolation it is for that blessed soul to behold face to face, in his beauty, and dignity, and glory, the angel who accompanied and assisted her with so great fidelity all her life long, from the moment of her creation to that of her death.

Now she clearly sees, how many favors and graces she owed to him, and how carefully he administered the charge committed to him by the Lord, in the order of her salvation. How gratefully she now thanks him! what joy fills her heart when he, communicating to her his joy and happiness, says: "What is mine, is thine!" The soul united with her guardian Angel in love, beatitude, and glory, is almost transfigured in him. He then introduces her into the company and communion of all the other Angels.

The first choir of Angels salute her with the invitation: "Come, thou Bride of Christ! receive the crown of glory!"

These Angels represent the paternal care of God over all rational beings, especially man. The merits which the soul obtained on earth, either by preserving her baptismal innocence, or by the fervor of her penance, to purify herself from every stain of actual sin,—these merits are here rewarded, and shine like jewels—increasing the glory of the purified soul.

St. Gertrude once saw a blessed soul, whose garment presented the appearance of being torn in several places; the rents were all adorned with magnificent pearls. The Saint asked the meaning of what she saw. The soul answered: These rents, which thou beholdest, were so many sins committed by me; the pearls represent the tears which I shed for them. Those penitential tears were changed into pearls, and now adorn and glorify me. "O happy penance!" said St. Peter, of Alcantara, to St. Teresa, to whom he appeared in a vision, "O happy penance!

which has gained for me so great a glory in Heaven!" "O Jesus!" said St. Gertrude, one day, "I am not worthy that the earth should sustain me!" Jesus answered: "Thou thinkest so, yet, I tell thee, the Angels in Heaven are all eager for thy coming thither, that they may receive thee into their communion, and be partakers of thy glory." "What is mine, is thine!" says every angel of this choir to that blessed soul, and she enters into the joy and beatitude of all the holy Angels.

Higher and higher she ascends, and still the heavenly chorus greets her anew. "Come, thou Bride of Christ! receive the crown of glory!" sing the Archangels.

These Angels represent the care of Divine Providence to strengthen all rational creatures, whilst struggling with the enemies of salvation; they especially represent the infinite mercy of God, as manifested in the Redemption of fallen man. All the good works of interior abnegation and mortification, which the Christian practised on earth, shine forth now, like so many jewels, beautifying and glorifying that blessed soul. "What is mine,

is thine!" sings, in turn, every Angel of this choir, and she enters into the joy and bliss of all the Archangels.

Higher still she mounts, and the dread Principalities salute and invite her: "Come, thou Bride of Christ! receive the crown of glory!"

The Angels of this choir reflect God's infinite pre-eminence as the Lord of the world, and the source of all governing power. Then do the good works, which that soul practised on earth, by contempt of the world and its vain allurements, shine forth resplendent, increasing still more her glory and beauty. "What is mine, is thine!" sings this angelic chorus, and forthwith the soul enters into the joy and beatitude of the heavenly Principalities.

Higher, higher still, and the Angels of the heavenly Virtues bow in salutation: "Come, thou Bride of Christ! receive the crown of glory!"

The Angels of this choir reflect God's creative power, on which nature, all her powers and all her functions depend. The merits, which the soul acquired, by the practice of

holy patience, by the love of suffering and tribulations for God's sake, now glitter, like radiant jewels, to increase the brightness of her joy, as well as the lustre of her glory. "What is mine, is thine!" sing the Angels of this choir, and so she enters into the glory and bliss of all the heavenly Virtues.

Higher still she wings her way, until the Angels of the heavenly Powers welcome her approach with joyful acclamation: "Come, thou Bride of Christ! receive the crown of glory!"

The Angels of this choir represent the Almighty Power, as Author of Grace, whence all grace derives its efficacy. The merits, which the soul acquired on earth, by her victorious struggle with the interior trials of the mind, now add a new increase to the lustre of her glory. "What is mine, is thine!" sings the angelic chorus, and immediately the blessed soul enters into the joy and beatitude of all the heavenly Powers!

Higher, higher still she ascends, and the Angels of the Dominations salute and invite

ner: "Come, thou Bride of Christ, receive the crown of glory!"

The Angels of this choir represent the Divine Majesty, the Sovereign Lord of all, who made man to his own image and likeness, and gave him dominion over all creatures under the sun. The merits, which the soul gained on earth, by the practice of works of charity, and by compassion for the poor and afflicted, now shine forth in dazzling lustre, adorning her with still greater glory. "What is mine, is thine!" sings the heavenly chorus, and the blessed soul enters into the joy and bliss of the Dominations.

Higher, higher mounts the blessed soul, and the choir of Thrones salute and invite her: "Come, thou Bride of Christ, receive the crown of glory!"

The Angels of this choir are the mirror and reflex of the eternal repose of God's Immutability, which, also, constitutes the eternal repose, and transcendent peace of those rational beings, that have passed victoriously through the manifold trials and temptations of their probationary state. The merits, which

the soul gained on earth by her zeal for the salvation of souls, shine now in dazzling splendor, for the greater adornment of her glorified state. "What is mine, is thine!" sings every Angel of this choir, and she enters into the glory and bliss of the heavenly Thrones.

Higher, higher still she wings her flight; the choir of the Cherubim receives and welcomes her: "Come, thou Bride of Christ, be crowned for all Eternity!"

The Angels of this choir represent the Divine Knowledge and Wisdom. The merits, which the soul acquired on earth, by the study of divine things, and by the knowledge of God's holy will, shine now, as brighest jewels, in the crown that shall adorn her brow throughout Eternity. O radiant crown! what earthly diadem can equal thee in lustre! "What is mine, is thine!" intones every Angel in the choir, as he communicates to the soul the measure of his bliss, and, immediately, she enters into the joy and glory of the Cherubim.

Up, still up she goes; the choir of the

Seraphim receives and salutes her: "Come, thou Bride of Christ, be crowned for all Eternity! Alleluia!"

The Angels of this choir are the mirror of Divine Love. The merits, gained by the soul on earth by acts of love of God, and by conformity to his holy will, shine forth now and increase her beatitude. "What is mine, is thine!" sings every Angel of this choir. She enters into the glory and joy of the Seraphim: she is all inflamed with the love of God, to the unutterable joy of her whole being.

She approaches now the highest order of Spirits, and, notwithstanding the glory and beauty of the myriads of Angels she has already seen, the sight of these glorious Spirits ravishes her heart. Soon she recognizes St. Gabriel, the Herald of Salvation to man, and St. Michael, the King of all the heavenly hosts. Gabriel salutes her: "Hail, full of grace and beauty, the Lord is with thee, and blessed art thou amongst the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem; and blessed be our Lord Jesus, who led thee, by the hand of thy Angel, to these realms of angelic glory!"

But the chief object of her wonder and admiration is St. Michael, the Prince of the heavenly hosts. He receives her with the majesty and sweetness which distinguish him from all the other Angels. "Who is like God?" Such was his war-cry, such his principle of action; and oh! how rejoiced is that soul, for that, having followed his example, and fought under his banner, from his lips, and from those of the other six, the mightiest and most glorious of the Angels, she hears: "What is mine, is thine!" and so she enters into the fullness of angelic joy, of bliss and glory!

If one mighty river pour its waters into the bosom of another, the united stream flows on, more and more majestic, to the ocean, as successive rivers join their waters with it. So it is with the glorified soul in Heaven, when, whilst torrents of joy flow on her amid the sublime music of those angelic choirs, on she floats to the ocean of God's infinite beatitude.

Yet, this is not even the full measure of glory and bliss, that awaits her in those celestial palaces. Other and mightier floods of joy are to pour forth their streams of bliss on that favored soul!

VI.

THE PROPHECIES.

O Thou, who didst the sacred Seers inspire,
And mad'st them speak to us Thy promises,
Grant that we may their sweet fulfillment see.
Give strength where weakness faints, or leads astray,
Give courage where succumbs the weary heart,
To our dim vision, here below, reveal
A glimmering streak of that celestial crown,
Which shall, for ever, grace the sainted brow
Of Him that fought, and conquered for thy love!

After the *Exultet*, on Holy Saturday, the Church begins the reading of the twelve Prophecies, which point to the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth, by means of his Church. In Heaven the soul contemplates the final and happy fulfillment of the same, in her own salvation, and that of mankind.

FIRST PROPHECY.

The *First* of these Prophecies, speaking of the creation of Heaven and earth, concludes with the solemn words: "And God saw all the things that he had made, and they were very good. So the Heavens and the earth were finished, and all the furniture of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made: and he rested on the seventh day." *

Here on earth, we know but little of what God has made. In Heaven the veil is removed, and we see creation as it is, in all its perfection and completeness.

The blessed soul sees in God all He has created; she beholds all the grandeur and magnificence, all the majesty and blissful arrangement of His creation. With what rapture does she acknowledge the truth of that affirmation: "And all was very good!" No longer does she celebrate the Sabbath of the Lord in types and figures; she has entered

* Gen., i, ii.

the eternal rest awarded to the victorious Christian, and nothing shall ever disturb that divine repose.

SECOND PROPHECY.

The *Second* Prophecy points to the saving Ark, and the olive-branch which the dove brought back to Noah; it recalls the bow of reconciliation, which appeared in the sky over Noah's altar, and the "sweet savor" that went up to the throne of God, from the sacrifice and the holocausts which the patriarch offered to the Lord. *

The blessed soul sees clearly now, in what mysterious manner the Church is the saving Ark, in spite of the ever-increasing persecutions that surge around her—the triumphant Ark, ever resting in safety on the top of the heavenly Sion. Within its sacred inclosures, the victorious child of that Church receives the olive-branch of peace, whilst the bow of reconciliation spans, with radiant lustre,

* Gen., viii.

the altar of the Lamb of God, and the glittering Cross—the emblem of Salvation—crowns the bright arch. From that altar, the "sweet savor" of the infinite merits of Christ is forever going up to the Eternal Throne.

THIRD PROPHECY.

The *Third* Prophecy speaks of the Sacrifice of Abraham, and the promise made to him: "Because thou hast done this thing—I will bless thee, and will multiply thy seed as the stars of Heaven, and as the sand that is by the sea-shore,—and, in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." *

The blessed soul sees now in Heaven, shining like stars before the throne of God, all those who belonged, in spirit, to the Father of the Faithful, and who were saved through Christ the Son of David, and of Abraham; and she herself shines like a star newly-set in the heavenly firmament of Salvation.

* Gen., xxii.

FOURTH PROPHECY.

The *Fourth* Prophecy relates the miracle by which the Lord drowned Pharaoh, and his army, in the Red Sea, and how Moses with all the people of God sang, with joy and exultation, the Canticle of Thanksgiving: "Let us sing to the Lord, for he is gloriously magnified: the horse and the rider he hath thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and my praise, and he is become salvation to me. He is my God, and I will glorify him; the God of my father, and I will exalt him. The Lord is as a man of war, Almighty is his name. He shall reign for ever and ever." *

The blessed soul looks down, from the height of Heaven, upon the fathomless abyss of Hell. There she beholds the infernal Pharaoh submerged, not in the Red Sea, but in an ocean of liquid fire—the unquenchable, everlasting flames; there too, she beholds all the powers that, on earth, united with him to persecute her, but, with God's assistance, they

* Exod., xv.

were gloriously overthrown. With what joy and gratitude does she now intone the Canticle of Salvation: "Let us sing to the Lord," she exclaims, "because He has been gloriously magnified by the redemption and salvation of fallen man. For this, all the saints glorify His name. Many enemies have arisen against me. Now do I behold all the dangers to which my salvation was exposed, all the temptations and allurements, all the malignant assaults of Lucifer and his allies,—the world, and the flesh. They are all vanquished, now and for ever. Alleluia! my enemies are crushed! I have conquered—not, indeed, by my own strength, but by the protecting power of God and His gracious aid. He is my God and my Lord! I am his creature. How shall I exalt and praise his name for ever. To Him alone be glory and thanksgiving from age to age, and throughout Eternity."

FIFTH PROPHECY.

The *Fifth* Prophecy reminds us, how the Lord encourages our zeal for perfection, by

directing our minds to the consideration of eternal rewards, by showing the many means He hath given us that we may secure our salvation through Jesus Christ, Our Saviour, and with the gracious and benign guidance of His Divine Providence.

How clearly, and with what abundant consolation, does the blessed soul now contemplate, in Heaven, the entire fulfillment of this Prophecy! Listen to its solemn introduction: "This is the inheritance of the servants of the Lord, and their justice with me, saith the Lord." Now she possesses and enjoys this promised inheritance; she is cleansed and purified from every stain, and shines, in the splendor of her justice, before the throne of God. Now does she hear the voice of the Eternal King inviting her: "Come, all ye that thirst, to the waters of Everlasting Joy! drink and be refreshed, and your soul shall be comforted, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you."

The blessed soul drinks freely from the founts of those living waters, without fear of ever losing them again, or of seeing them

diminished, by one single drop, through endless ages. She feels that she owes all this happiness to her redemption through Jesus Christ, according to the words of the same Prophecy: "Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, for a Leader and a Master." In following his precepts and his example, she was saved with all the Elect. Oh! by what wonderful and mysterious ways has Divine Providence accomplished the design of her salvation! "For, as the Heavens are exalted above the earth, so are my ways exalted above your ways, and my thoughts above your thoughts, saith the Lord."*

Indeed, the Blessed could never have expected to enjoy such a boundless super-abundance of delight, communicated to them as a return for such a small amount of merit. For, from the countless obstacles that impeded their salvation, and the many dangers to which they were exposed, they happily escaped, through the guardian care of the Divine Wisdom, and the merciful aid of the Divine Goodness.

* Isaias, lv : 9.

SIXTH PROPHECY.

The *Sixth* Prophecy once more proclaims that Divine Wisdom in which we so implicitly confide. This Infinite Wisdom signalizes its most glorious triumphs by the order and conservation of the visible world, but incomparably more by the preservation and glorification of the Blessed in Heaven. "If thou hadst walked in the way of God," we read in this Prophecy, "thou surely hadst dwelt in peace for ever." *

In that way of God, the blessed soul did walk, during the days of her earthly pilgrimage; and how joyfully she now thanks and praises the Lord Most High, for that merciful care and guidance which delivered her from all danger, and brought her safe through the Valley of the Shadow of Death to the mansions of Eternal Peace! She now beholds, unveiled, the wonderful tissue of communicated and pre-ordained grace, whereof a bountiful and all-wise Providence wove for her the

* Baruch, iii.

garment of Glory, which now invests her with the splendor of majesty.

Now, too, does she clearly perceive the efficacy and importance of every grace bestowed upon her, from the earliest dawn of reason, to the last breath she drew on earth. She now sees the salutary effect of every word of instruction in the ways of holiness, which she ever heard, on earth, from the mouth of father or mother, from pious friends, teachers, confessors, preachers. She now realizes what she learned from good books, and from the virtuous example of other Christians. Above all, does she now behold, in the joy and exultation of her heart, the wonderful treasures of grace, communicated to her by the channels of the several Sacraments she frequented, by the many holy Masses she heard, and by the many Holy Communions she received.

It is true, all these graces were the purely gratuitous gift of God, but how astonished is she on perceiving the bounteous liberality wherewith God rewarded her co-operation with them. "O Israel, how great is the house of God, and how vast is the place of his

possession; it is high and immense." The blessed soul has now entered this house of God, and possesses the immeasurable realms of Glory. High above the stars is that blissful region, and its beauty and its glory are beyond all comparison. "He called the light," exclaims the prophet, "and it obeyed him with trembling. And the stars have given light in their watches, and rejoiced: they were called, and they said: Here we are; and with cheerfulness they have shined forth to him that made them. This is our God."

The blessed soul, in her upward flight, passed all these stars and radiant spheres, rejoicing in the contemplation of those wonderful manifestations of the Divine Wisdom, Power and Grandeur; now she basks in the effulgent beams of the Eternal Sun, whose rays illumine all creation.

The Prophecy concludes with these most consoling words: "Afterwards, he was seen upon earth, and conversed with men." *

Blessed, indeed, were the eyes that beheld

* Baruch, iii.

the Saviour when He tabernacled in mortal flesh, and conversed with men; but how much more blessed are they who see Him in Heaven, where He reveals Himself, face to face, and converses with the glorified spirits of men. Blessed, indeed, are they who see God, face to face, with the eyes of the intellect, and behold with the eyes of the senses, the Saviour of the world in His glory, at the right of His heavenly Father, and converse with Him, as inmates and domestics of the House of God.

SEVENTH PROPHECY.

The *Seventh* Prophecy relates to the Vision of the Prophet Ezechiel, regarding the resurrection of the dead: "Behold, I will open your graves, and bring you out of your sepulchres, O my people; and will bring you into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord." *

As the Lord himself explains this Prophecy, it has a two-fold sense. First, a moral sense,

* Ezech., xxxvii.

announcing the deliverance of the people of God from the captivity, from which they had almost despaired of ever being released. They say: "Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost." The Lord consoles them, and promises a speedy deliverance. This prophetic vision points, secondly, to the future resurrection from the dead, and especially to that of the Elect.

The blessed soul now fully experiences, in their heavenly fulfillment, the consolations of the two-fold meaning of the Prophecy. There she beholds the countless multitudes of the ransomed children of men, and rejoices with them, because the Lord hath changed the mourning of their exile into a jubilee of everlasting joy, after delivering them from the thraldom of their mortal bodies, and introducing them into the Land of Promise, there to animate them with the breath of Eternal Life.

She, also, rejoices in the anticipated joy of the future resurrection, since her entrance into Heaven is for her the indubitable pledge of the glorious resurrection of her body, at the day of general judgment. Moreover, she now

contemplates the glorified bodies of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, as the type and figure of the glory awaiting the resuscitated bodies of the Saints, that is to say, of all the chosen children of God, who have done His holy will on earth, and thereby sanctified their souls for Heaven.

EIGHTH PROPHECY.

The *Eighth* Prophecy is that wherein Isaias, the Prophet, announces the glory and abundance which the Lord has bountifully prepared for all those who bear patiently the transient trials and tribulations of this weary world. "In that day," he says, "the bud of the Lord shall be in magnificence and glory, and the fruit of the earth shall be high, and a great joy to them that have escaped of Israel. And it shall come to pass, that every one that shall be left in Sion, and that shall remain in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, every one that is written in life in Jerusalem." *

* Isaias, iv.

In Heaven, this community and society, consisting of Saints only, is to be found; because nothing defiled can enter therein; no atom of imperfection is there seen, nor any shade of sorrow: all is joy—endless, overflowing joy.

NINTH PROPHECY.

The *Ninth* Prophecy describes the first Pasch, celebrated by the children of Israel, in Egypt, on the night of their deliverance from the cruel bondage of Pharaoh. They eat the lamb, that had been sacrificed, and the blood thereof saved them from the hand of the Destroying Angel. *

This Jewish Pasch was a figure of the Lamb of God, immolated for us, whose blood has delivered us from the tyranny of Hell, and opened for us the gates of Heaven. On earth, the blessed soul had celebrated Easter, according to the spiritual meaning of the old Scriptural rite, as a pilgrim, namely, her loins

* Exod., xii.

girt with self-denial, and standing as one ready for a journey. In Heaven, she now celebrates Easter, confirmed in grace, free from all temptation, no longer as one traveling life's weary paths; she has reached her journey's end, her final resting-place, and she intones, with all the Saints, the Canticle of Praise, Thanksgiving and Adoration to the Lamb: "'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power and divinity, and wisdom and strength, and honor and glory, and benediction.' And I heard all saying: 'To him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, benediction, and honor, and glory, and power, for ever and ever.'" *

TENTH PROPHECY.

The *Tenth* Prophecy is that of the Prophet Jonas, on the penance of the Ninivites. Ninive, by doing penance, found mercy before the Lord; and the Lord spared the people that humbled themselves before Him, and repented;

* Apoc., v.

and His Infinite Mercy was magnified, and most wonderfully manifested in their behalf. *

But how much more gloriously is the Divine Mercy manifested in behalf of the Blessed in Heaven! God has not only spared them, in view of their contrite hearts and penitential works; but for them he has brought good out of evil, and made their very faults to redound to their greater glory. Those faults humbled them, and made them afterwards more zealous in the practice of virtue, so that they might repair, by the fervor of their prayers and penance, the transgressions and imperfections of their previous life. The merits of those penitential works shine, now, like jewels of immense price, in the crown of victory which adorns their brow. Every Saint in Heaven gives praise and honor to God for this triumph of His Infinite Mercy, Wisdom and Justice; and there is no sweeter consolation for a blessed soul, in Heaven, than to give honor and praise to God, for that manifestation of the Divine Clemency, which effaced all her sins.

* Jonas, iii.

ELEVENTH PROPHECY.

The *Eleventh* Prophecy reminds us of the farewell Canticle of Moses, which he solemnly pronounced before the children of Israel, after he had written the book of the Old Covenant, and led the people to the borders of the Promised Land: "Hear, O ye heavens, and I will speak: let the earth give ear to the words of my mouth. Let what I say be looked for like rain: and let my words drop down like dew. Like the shower upon the grass, and the snow upon the dry herb: for I will call upon the name of the Lord. Publish the greatness of our God: he is God; his works are perfect, and all his ways are justice."

The soul of this great servant of God was filled, at once, with sweet consolation and bitter sorrow. He was bidding farewell to a people, for whom he had done so much, and who, far from appreciating his labors and his love, had often and grievously afflicted his heart. He gazed from the top of the mountain, where he stood, or that long-desired land, which, for forty years of toilsome wandering

through the desert, had been the object of his search, and which he himself was not permitted to enter. What a sorrowful thought! yet, with his sorrow is blended no repining; his heart swells with gratitude and love for God's Providence, which had guided His people thither, with such wondrous manifestations of care and power.*

How much more reason has the blessed soul to invite Heaven and earth, and all the Saints, to praise God, with her, for that His gracious Providence, like the eagle exciting her young to fly, hovered over her with protecting care, and spread its sheltering wings, till it carried her in safety to the promised land of Heaven! She, too, has accomplished the work ordained for her on earth, and written the book of her life, by faithfully keeping the precepts of the Divine Law.

* Deut., xxxi.

TWELFTH PROPHECY.

The *Twelfth* Prophecy, read by the Church on Holy Saturday, presents, for our admiration, the magnanimous courage and generosity of those young heroes, Sidrach, Misach, and Abdenago, who could be brought, by no inducements, to bow down before the statue of Nabuchodonosor, and who boldly and intrepidly told that haughty monarch: "Our God, whom we worship, is able to save us from the furnace of burning fire, and to deliver us out of thy hands, O king! But if he will not, be it known to thee, O king, that we will not worship thy gods, nor adore the golden statue which thou hast set up."

And, see, the Angel of the Lord went down into the furnace, and he drove out the flame of the fire, and made in the midst of the furnace, as it were, a cooling breeze, so that the fire touched not the three servants of God, nor did them any harm. Then the three, with one voice, praised and blessed God in the furnace, saying: "Blessed art thou, O Lord, the God of our fathers; and worthy to be praised,

and glorified, and exalted above all in all ages: and blessed is the holy name of thy glory, and worthy to be praised, and exceeding glorious for ever." *

If this miracle of Divine Power and protection justly moved, and, irresistibly impelled the hearts of those three young men to give thanks to God, and to invite Heaven and earth, and all creatures of the universe to unite with them in celebrating and magnifying the power, goodness, and mercy of God, their Defender and Deliverer; with how much greater reason does the blessed soul in Heaven exult, and give thanks to God, the more so when she calls to mind that, in the depths of Hell, there is a dreadful furnace prepared for the reprobate sinner; an infernal furnace, heated not only with combustible matter, such as is used on earth for similar purposes, but with the breath of vindictive, Infinite Justice; the flames whereof ascend, not only "forty-nine cubits," but to an immeasurable height! She now contemplates, in safety, that furnace

* Daniel, iii.

into which human respect, that cunning and treacherous ally of Hell, would have precipitated her, by leading her on to violate the law of God, had she listened to it—as so many others do, who, for fear of the censure or ridicule of men, doom themselves to everlasting ruin. But, with God's assistance, she did courageously and victoriously overcome this human respect; therefore, now, she sings the Canticle of Thanksgiving, not in a furnace with one angel, but in the boundless realms of bliss, surrounded by myriads of Angels and Saints; yea, with all these glorious servants of God she sings in unison, the Canticle of Eternal Thanksgiving:

"Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our fathers. Thou art worthy to be praised, and glorified, and exalted above all the Heavens forever. Blessed is Thy holy Name throughout all the world, but especially here, in Thy chosen dwelling-place, the everlasting abode of Thy glory!

"Blessed art Thou in the Temple of Thy Glory, and exceedingly to be praised for ever.

"Blessed art Thou on the Throne of Thy

Glory, and worthy of praise for ever and ever!

"Blessed art Thou, who beholdest the depths, and sittest on the wings of the Cherubim; worthy art Thou of all praise for ever!

"Blessed art Thou in the firmament of Heaven, and worthy of praise for ever and ever!

"All ye works of the Lord, praise the Lord, and mightily extol His name for ever!

"Ye Angels of the Lord, bless the Lord, and exalt him above all, for ever and ever!

"Ye Heavens, bless the Lord, and show forth his glory for ever!

"Ye waters that are above the firmament, bless the Lord for ever.

"All ye oceans and seas that gird the earth, bless the Lord for ever!

"All ye powers of the Lord, bless the Lord, and exalt his name for ever!

"Ye sun and moon, bless the Lord, exalt his name for ever!

"Ye stars of Heaven, lights of the firmament, bless the Lord for ever!

"O, all ye things that God hath made glo-

rious in eternal beauty, magnify His name for ever!

"O earth, through the Church of Christ, changed again into a terrestrial paradise, bless the Lord; praise and glorify his name for ever!

"Ye spirits of the just made perfect, extol the glory of the Lord; sing praise for ever to the God of Heaven!

"O, all ye holy and humble of heart, bless the Lord; praise and glorify His name for ever!

"O, all ye religious, especially ye my friends and companions on earth, in whose company I served God, and fought victoriously the battles of the Lord, praise and magnify His name for ever; give thanks to the Lord because he is good, and his mercy endureth for ever!

"Praise Him and thank Him, with me, for ever and ever!

"O my soul, praise the Lord and exalt Him above all for ever; because he saved me from Hell, and delivered me from the power of the Evil One; He snatched me from the midst of devouring flames, and conducted me, in triumph, to the kingdom of Light and Joy, and

the blessed companionship of Saints and Angels, where I shall reign throughout the endless ages of eternity.

"Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!"

VII.

THE BAPTISMAL FONT AND THE LITANY OF SAINTS.

Oh! that on pinions, like the dove,
My soul might from this exile flee—
Soar to the sinless realms above,
From peril and temptation free!
That there, in peace, at rest for ever
I might, join'd with God's chosen band,
A member of that union stand,
Which Sin, nor Time, nor Death can sever.

After the reading of the Twelve Prophecies the Church, on Holy Saturday, blesses the Baptismal Font, and sprinkles the blessed Baptismal Water towards each of the four cardinal points.

In Heaven, the blessed soul contemplates the astonishing effect of baptismal grace, beholding the innumerable multitudes of the

Elect who, coming from the four corners of the earth, entered the Church by the grace of Baptism, communicated to them either by the Sacred Laver of water, by the effusion of their own blood, or by the overflowing desire of their heart. Now they are all robed in spotless white, representing the justification of the Blessed through the merits of Jesus Christ.

Thrice the great Easter-candle is immersed into the baptismal font, the Priest singing: "May the power of the Holy Ghost descend upon the fullness of this font.

Thrice does the Guardian Angel, with solemn and increasing love exclaim: "Enter, thou blessed soul, and immerse thyself, with the Saints of God, in the fathomless depths of Heavenly Beatitude, filled to overflowing with the love of the Holy Ghost!"

VIII.

ENTRANCE OF THE BLESSED SOUL INTO THE BLISSFUL COMMUNION OF THE SAINTS.

Hail! conquerors of Death and Hell,
Hail! victors laurel-crowned of Heaven,
Hail! company of all the Blest.
No, ne'er to mortal man 't was given
To picture, e'en in gorgeous dreams,
The fullness of celestial streams,
That drown the thought of happiness
In the reality of your bliss.

The Church, having blessed the Baptismal Water, on Holy Saturday, begins to sing the Litany of Saints.

In Heaven, the blessed soul now beholds all those Saints, face to face, and enters into the glory of their beatitude. "After this," says St. John, in the Apocalypse, "I saw a great multitude, which no man can number,

of all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues, standing before the Throne, and in the sight of the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palms in their hands."

What a jubilee of joy to see, in their ineffable glory, all the crowned Saints, our blessed brothers and sisters in Adam and in Christ! The Scripture speaks of Heaven as our *home*, the Promised Land, where all the faithful servants of God are to meet again, to part no more for ever; where they dwell together in the fullness of bliss throughout the rolling ages of eternity! What a blissful moment, then, is that in which the ransomed, purified soul joins the illustrious and happy society of the Saints!

St. Magdalen, of Pazzi, being in an ecstacy, saw the glory of St. Aloysius Gonzaga in Heaven, whereupon she exclaimed: "I could never have imagined that there was such glory in Heaven." What would she have said, had it been given her to see the glory of a St. Paul, or a St. Ignatius?

The *first* cause of this ineffable glorification of the Saints is their celestial likeness to God,

by their spotless purity, and their essential union with Him in the light of glory.

If St. Catherine, of Sienna, could affirm, of all souls in the state of sanctifying grace, that nothing could be compared to their beauty; how entrancingly beautiful must be the blessed soul which is confirmed in this state of grace, and, through the light of Glory, transferred into the beauty of God Himself!

The *second* cause of the inexpressible glory of the Saints, is their election and vocation in the kingdom of God on earth. Every Sacrament, which impresses a mark on the soul, is, in Heaven, distinguished by a particular lustre of glory, which wonderfully increases the beauty of the soul, that has, on earth, been baptised, confirmed, or ordained.

Moreover, the particular rank and order of vocation, by which the soul has been honored and distinguished on earth, has its representation in the glory of Heaven.

No doubt, the Patriarchs, the Prophets, and the Apostles, shall, also, be glorified in Heaven, by a particular radiance, corresponding to the dignity of their rank and vocation

on earth. Another species of glory will distinguish, amongst the Saints, the earliest servants of God, Adam and Eve, David, Moses, Abraham; and still another, and higher degree of glory, surrounds those who were nearest and dearest to Jesus and Mary, during their sojourn on earth, viz: St. Anne and St. Joachim, St. Elizabeth and St. Zachary, St. John the Baptist, and, above all, St. Joseph, the virginal spouse of the Queen of Heaven, and the foster-father of Jesus, the Incarnate Son of God. Who can conceive the splendor of this Saint's glory amongst the multitude of the Blessed!

The *third* cause of the different degrees of the glory of the Saints, is the different degree of their merits, and the number and value of the good works they have done on earth. Jesus himself tells us: "Whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little ones, yea, even a cup of cold water, shall not lose his reward." * But every reward in Heaven is of that kind of which St. Paul said "the eye hath not seen,

* Matthew, x.

nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what things God hath prepared for them that love him." * Here, on earth, we do not know, and can not know, what the Saints, in their love of God, whilst imitating Christ, have thought, desired, spoken, acted, suffered. In Heaven, their whole life is manifest to all, even from their first thought to their last breath; and every throb of their heart for God is there rewarded with a particular brightness of glory. What a ravishing sight for the blessed soul to see them at once adorned with the jewels of their innumerable merits!

There is said to be in the city of Prague, in Bohemia, an exceedingly rich and costly monstrance, covered all over with diamonds: its value is estimated at some hundred thousands of pounds. This monstrance is kept in a vault, where it is guarded day and night. I have been told, that when the tabernacle is opened in this dark vault, into which no ray of light can penetrate, the monstrance pours

* I. Cor., ii.

forth such a flood of light from its numerous diamonds, that it can be seen in all its beauty, the whole place being illumined with its rays. So it is with the Saints in Heaven: each one of whom is, as it were, a celestial monstrance, adorned and embellished with the diamonds and radiant jewels of all the good thoughts, desires, words, works, and sufferings, whereby he merited the degree of glory that distinguishes him amongst the Saints.

After the resurrection, the body, too, shall participate in this particular glory of the soul. How wondrously grand and beautiful must be the choir of Martyrs amongst the citizens of the New Jerusalem! "Every stripe and every wound," says St. Augustine, "which they received, in their confession of Christ and of his holy faith on earth, shall there be marked by a particular lustre."

The *fourth* cause of the different degrees of glory amongst the Saints in Heaven, is the particular state of life they embraced on earth for Christ's dear sake.

Three crowns of this kind are specially mentioned by the Doctors of the Church, viz:

the crown of Martyrs, of Virgins, and the crown of Doctors.

No doubt, the blood which the Martyrs shed for Christ will, as we have just said, invest them with extraordinary splendor, and they shall glitter in the royal purple of their kingly glory.

The crown of the *Virgins.* St. John the Evangelist says, in the Apocalypse: "And I saw: and behold, a Lamb stood upon Mount Sion, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand, having his name, and the name of his Father written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from Heaven, as the noise of many waters, and as the voice of great thunder, and the voices which I heard, was as the voice of harpers, harping on their harps, and they sang, as it were, a new Canticle, before the throne, and no man could sing the Canticle, but those hundred and forty-four thousand, who were purchased from the earth. These are they who were not defiled with women: for they are virgins. These follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." *

* Apoc., xiv.

The third crown of particular glory, is that of the *Doctors* and teachers of the Faith, who encourage and enlighten others in the way of Christian perfection. Of these the Holy Ghost says, by the mouth of the Prophet Daniel: "But they, who are learned, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that instruct many to justice, as stars for all eternity." * And Christ himself declares: "Whosoever shall do and teach, the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven." †

St. Chrysostom assigns the reason for this peculiar increase of glory. He says: "As God estimates the human soul higher than all the wonders of his creative power in the visible world; with what degree of glory will he not invest those in Heaven, who instructed others unto salvation?"

We may, also, reasonably suppose, that God has prepared for the different Religious Orders of the holy Church, and for those who had the happiness of belonging to them on earth, a

* Daniel, xii. † Matthew, v.

peculiar reward, and a distinguishing glory in Heaven. The connection between the Church Militant and the Church Triumphant is so intimate, that this peculiar species of vocation can not fail to have a corresponding distinction in the realms of Bliss.

St. Teresa seems to have reference to this, when she mentioned a peculiar glory in Heaven for the members of the Society of Jesus. We may justly infer from this, that all the other Religious Orders of the holy Church are similarly distinguished in the glory of Heaven.

Each one of these Orders has its own mission to fulfill in the Kingdom of God on earth, and contributes, in its own way, to the greater advancement and glory of all. Does not this seem to foreshadow, that each of those noble brotherhoods and sisterhoods shall be also distinguished, one from the other, in Heaven, each glorified in a way peculiar to itself?

What a consoling and edifying sight it is, to see a great number of Religious, robed in the habits of their several Orders, assembled together for the celebration of Divine Service!

How much grander would their display appear, could we see them headed by their respective founders, a St. Benedict, St. Bernard, St. Francis, St. Dominic, St. Ignatius, or a St. Alphonsus! How our hearts would swell with joyful emotion, could we see, at one view, all those that ever belonged to each one of these Orders; all the illustrious men and women, whose holy lives, salutary teachings, and Christian heroism edified the Church, during their mortal career, and who are still her noblest ornaments.

These Religious Orders are the legions of honor in the holy Church, and not a few of them have merited and obtained for their members the lofty title of "*legio fulminans*," against the powers of darkness. When we behold a body of troops, arrayed in the same uniform, returning as victors from the battle-field, is it not a cheerful and a charming sight? So we may contemplate, in Heaven, the glorified members of these several Orders, as so many conquering troops of the Church, once Militant, now Triumphant. What a glorious sight it is to behold them eternally

united in their mutual and unchangeable beatitude, sheltered for ever from the storms of life, in the secure haven of ever-enduring rest and safety!

We might also compare these Orders, in their heavenly glory, to the Himalayas, or other chains of lofty mountains, which rise from the surface of our globe. Among them may be seen one point, or peak, overtopping all the rest, surrounded by others of almost equal hight, and these again by others, which gradually decrease in elevation, till they sink to the level of some charming valley of cool and verdant freshness, or a smiling plain of gay and exquisite beauty!

In Heaven, we see St. Benedict surrounded by his hundreds of thousands, nay, millions of brothers, and sisters, who have been saved during the fourteen hundred years of his Order's existence. Ascending near to the summit of his virtues and glories, rise the blessed spirits of St. Maurus, St. Gregory, St. Boniface, St. Gertrude, St. Mechtildis, with a countless number of holy Popes, Bishops, Abbots, Doctors, and many Martyrs, all belong-

ing to this first-born Order of the Western Church.

There we see St. Francis of Assisium, in the very hight of his elevation. Next to him, in glory, we behold a St. Bonaventura, a St. Anthony of Padua, a St. Capistran, a St. Clare, a St. Elizabeth, and all the multitude of the other Saints and Blessed of his Order, crowned according to the different degrees of their merits.

St. Dominic is there, towering amongst the blessed brethren and sisters of his Order; and, at an almost equal hight of glory, are seen St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Vincent Ferrier, St. Catherine of Sienna, St. Rose of Lima, and all the other lights of that illustrious Order.

There we see, in the loftiest regions of heavenly bliss, St. Ignatius, surrounded by his glorious brethren of the Society of Jesus: chief amongst whom are St. Francis Xavier, St. Francis Borgia, St. Francis Regis, St. Francis Hieronymo, St. Aloysius Gonzaga, St. Stanislaus Kostka, and all the thousands of Martyrs, and other great servants of God, who sanctified their souls, and who won the palm of victory

under the banner of that noble champion of the Church of Christ.

And so are shining, with especial brilliancy, all the other founders and members of the different Orders and Congregations.

It must be, however, remarked, that when contemplating, in this manner, the religious Orders in the glory of Heaven, we do not intend to attach to it the meaning of a separate gathering of the members of these Orders, but we merely contemplate their particular glorification and mutual interchange of bliss, as the reward of their fellowship on earth.

Finally, according to the teachings of the Doctors of the Church, every soul that enters the golden gates of Heaven receives, through the merits and munificence of her Divine Bridegroom, a *nuptial gift*, whereby she is, in a special manner, glorified among the Saints. What particular gifts these are no mortal can ever imagine; but, whatever they may be, the blessed soul perceives them amidst all the glory of the Saints, and not only does she see, to her great joy and consolation, all this accumulation of glory, but she herself

enters into that ocean of bliss; and the choirs of Saints welcome and invite her, as the holy Angels did before.

The blessed soul now descries the multitudes of children that left this world, unstained by sin, wearing the white robe of Baptismal Innocence, their gracious host crowned by roseate bloom of the martyred Innocents of Bethlehem. They all salute her with the joyful welcome: "What is mine, is thine; enter into our Eternal Blessedness!"

She sees the choir of Holy Virgins, blooming as lilies, in the Garden of Paradise. This radiant band invites her, too, with a cheerful chorus of exultation: "Purified soul: come, enter thou into our eternal bliss!"

She sees the glorious choirs of Confessors, Patriarchs, Prophets, Priests, and Bishops, who all salute her with joyful welcome, and communicate to her their glory and beatitude.

She sees St. Stephen, St. Lawrence, and all the triumphant army of Martyrs. With loud acclaim they welcome the new citizen to her heavenly home, and graciously invite her to share their everlasting glory and happiness.

She sees the illustrious choir of the Holy Apostles, in all the princely dignity of their high office in the Church of God on earth. She sees St. Anne, the gracious mother of Mary, St. Joachim, her father, St. Joseph, her blessed spouse — all in the surpassing splendor of their exalted rank, as the royal family of the Great King. And every one of these Saints, with sweet benignity, welcomes the blessed soul to the heavenly palace, greeting her with the affectionate invitation: "Come, dear ransomed soul, enter with us into the glory of the Celestial Kingdom!"

We read in the life of St. Jane Frances de Chantal, that her soul, on leaving her pure body for a blessed eternity, ascended to Heaven in the shape of a ball of fire, and that the glorified soul of her spiritual father, St. Francis de Sales, who died before her, came down from Heaven to meet her, also under the appearance of a ball of fire, and that the two globes thus meeting were united into one, and so entered Heaven. In this wonderful apparition, the blessed soul of St. Francis de Sales seemed visibly to say to that of St. Jane

Frances: "Come, dear daughter in Christ. what is mine, is thine; enter with me into Glory!"

So it is that all the souls in Heaven communicate their glory, one to the other. The Scripture calls Heaven, *the communion of Saints*, the kingdom of mutual joy, the eternal interchange of heavenly love.

The measure of this interchange of joy, love and glory, depends on the relation wherein one soul has stood to the other, on earth, according to its vocation; and how much one contributed to the salvation and sanctification of the other. What exquisite joy it must be for the blessed soul to meet again, in Heaven, the good father, mother, brothers, or sisters, who happily contributed to her salvation, or who were themselves encouraged and assisted by her to walk steadily in the path that led them to their heavenly home! How perfect an interchange of joy then takes place, and crowns, as it were, the immeasurable bliss previously enjoyed!

We read in the life of St. Francis Xavier, that the most ardent wish of his heart, while

here below, was to convert China, to reconcile Russia with the holy Church, to bring back into the one fold the nations of Germany,—recently carried away from the faith by the devastating flood of the falsely-styled Reformation,—then to repair to Rome, embrace his father in Christ, St. Ignatius, and thank him for all the blessings he had received through him. Oh! how gladly would I have witnessed the meeting of those two illustrious Saints, and seen the outpouring of fervent gratitude in a heart so great, so noble, so loving as that of Xavier, filled, as it was, to overflowing with the remembrance of all the wonderful graces, for which he stood indebted to St. Ignatius—Had not St. Ignatius addressed him, at Paris, with such an irresistible power of living faith and holy charity, in the memorable words: "What doth it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul;" and had he not given, in the mirror of his own virtues, the paraphrase, as it were, of this solemn admonition; never, perhaps, had Xavier obtained that abundance of grace, which enabled him

to become so great a Saint and so great an Apostle for the salvation of numberless souls.

This burning desire was never obtained on earth, but it was granted in Heaven, with infinitely more joy and consolation than it could ever have realized here below. Who can imagine the meeting of St. Francis with St. Ignatius, in Heaven, when he presented to him the multitudes of souls he had snatched from perdition, and brought to everlasting joy and triumph! Oh! to have seen, on the 31st day of July, in the year 1556, those blessed souls uniting with each other, as St. Ignatius entered Heaven!

What a consoling object of contemplation for a soul meditating on Heaven! and what an inducement it is to labor for the salvation of souls, when we think of reigning in Heaven for all Eternity, in the company of such souls as these! How immensely is the joy of Heaven increased in the blessed soul, by the confluence of so many streams of bliss arising from her union with all the Saints into whose communion and beatitude she now enters.

Yet, all this joy is scarcely a drop in the ocean of bliss that still awaits her.

IX

MARY IN HEAVEN.

O, thou! of womankind the noblest boast,
Virgin and Mother, Hand-maid, Queen alike,
Mother and Daughter, Spouse of the Most High!
O, thou! in whom such mysteries unite,
What praise of mine could speak thy boundless grace,—
That highest gift claimed by thy lowliness?
From Him who thus exalts thee now, behold!
This boon thy suppliant craves through thee: on earth,
When my career is o'er, take me to thee.

At length, the guardian Angel conveys the blessed soul to the throne of MARY, the Queen of Heaven, the glorious Mother of the Saviour-God. With what ecstatic joy does the blessed soul exclaim, when she beholds the ineffable grandeur of *her* surpassing glory: "I see the Mother of God, the Mother of my Redeemer, and my most beloved Mother; I see her in all the splendor of her everlasting dominion!"

Yes, I now see Mary, in the incomparable

greatness of her prerogatives, above all other created beings!

I see her, before whom the Angels bow, as the marvel of Divine Power, Wisdom and Love.

I see her, face to face, in the brightness of the light of glory. How immeasurably does she surpass all the beauty and glory of the Angels, by virtue of her high prerogative as Queen of Heaven!

I see in her, crowned with royal pre-eminence, all the radiant qualities and glorious prerogatives of the Angels and Archangels, the heavenly Principalities, the Powers, Virtues and Dominations, the Thrones, Cherubim and Seraphim.

I now see, clearly, why it is that the holy Church has applied the Book of Wisdom, in a particular manner, to Mary, as the emblem and crown of the whole creation, and the noblest creature that ever came from the creating hand of God—the blessed Humanity of the Incarnate Word alone excepted.

I see her now as the lily among the thorns, the chosen of all mankind, the Immaculate

Eve of the New Covenant; I see her by the side of her Divine Son, on the throne of her all-surpassing Majesty.

I see her in that radiant beauty which, on the day of her Assumption, ravished and astonished the Angels themselves, so that they exclaimed in rapt amazement: "Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, as a pillar of aromatical spices." *

I now see, and understand, why the Church has specially applied the entire poem of the Canticle of Canticles to Mary, since she is truly the Bride of the Holy Ghost.

But what are all these wonderful prerogatives, in the order of Nature,—which elevate Mary so far above the highest of the heavenly choirs, by the excellence of her wisdom, the power of her will, and all her natural beauty,—compared with her matchless eminence in the order of Grace? If every soul, placed in the state of Grace, is rendered so unspeakably beautiful, by union with God, how great must

* Canticles, iii, vi.

be the beauty of the Mother of Grace in this her supernatural, ineffable, eternal union with God?

I now, for the first time, understand why it was, that the Archangel Gabriel saluted her with the distinctive title of "full of grace." I see, that Mary, at the moment of her Immaculate Conception, possessed a greater abundance of grace than all the angelic hosts together, and that every grace, ever communicated to angels or to men, flowed from the Heart of Jesus to the heart of Mary, and thence down to the Earth and to Purgatory. This was revealed one day to St. Gertrude, when she saw, in a vision, this stream of grace flowing from the Heart of Jesus into that of Mary, and thence through the heavens to the Earth and the fiery prison of Purgatory.

Now I see, face to face, this resplendent Mirror of Divine Justice, by means of which the Infinite Holiness of God is so wonderfully, so clearly reflected!

I see every inspiration she received from the Holy Ghost, every illumination of her mind, every motion of her heart, produced by the

operation of God during her mortal life, with which she so perfectly corresponded to the greater glory of God, according to that great motto of her life, which her heart pronounced with its first aspiration: "Behold the hand maid of the Lord; be it done unto me accord ing to thy word."

I see all her virtues and all her merits like so many glorious stars in the Empire of Light, adorning the crown of her incomparable majesty. Now I see, as it were, unveiled, her whole life, from her first breath in the womb of the blessed Anne, till she died of Divine Love, in Jerusalem, and her spotless soul winged her flight to the loving Heart of her Jesus.

Now am I able to understand and contemplate, her mysterious relation to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, as mother of the Incarnate Son of God.

I see, in the light of the beatific vision, her entire intercourse with Jesus, from the moment of his Incarnation, after the Annuncia tion at Nazareth, till his last breath on the

Cross; and I contemplate her union with Him, as the Redeemer of mankind, seated by His side, for all eternity, on the highest throne of Glory.

Now do I clearly see, and fully comprehend her dignity and power, as Mother and protectress of the Militant Church; — what share she had in the triumphs of the whole Church, and of every one of her victorious children. How it was, by her intervention and gracious aid, that every sinner obtained the grace of conversion, and secured his salvation; and how every soul received its sanctifying grace through her; and how, to her, after Jesus, every blessed soul in Heaven owes eternal glory.

I now see and understand, to the sweetest consolation of my heart, what a share Mary had, above all, in *my salvation*. I see, how she obtained for me the grace of a sincere conversion to God, after my long wandering in the desert of sin; how she obtained for me, the grace of vocation to that state of life which was, for me, the way to Heaven. And I further see, how she obtained for me, in

this my vocation, every grace necessary for my sanctification.

I now see, how she assisted me in every temptation, and strengthened me to crush the Serpent's head. I see, clearly, how often she snatched me from the very grasp of the enemy; how she averted from me the most dangerous temptations, which, had they assailed me, must undoubtedly have caused me to perish.

"Hail Mary!" exclaims the blessed soul, as she bows, in a transport of holy joy, before the august throne of the Queen of Heaven, "Hail Mary in Heaven, full of grace, full of glory; the Lord is with thee for ever; blessed art thou amongst all the Angels and Saints; and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus, by whose side thou art seated in the kingdom of his glory. Holy Mary, Mother of God, and my sweet Mother, too, receive me as thy second child, and let me share thine eternal bliss in the world without end!"

I now see, unveiled, thy maternal heart, and all the boundless love and tenderness, which the Lord infused into it, for every living soul, especially for me.

How sweet and consoling was it for thy servant, Alphonso Rodriguez, when thou didst say to him in a vision: "Dear Alphonso! if thou couldst but know, how much I love thee!" Yet, how infinitely greater is now my joy and consolation, in the light of thy visible and most gracious presence! I see now, with how great a compassion, care, and affection thou didst guard and protect me, till I began, in earnest, to live only for God and my salvation, and seriously and firmly resolved not to offend God any more by willful sin, or even willful imperfection.

I can see distinctly how, by thy intercession, I obtained from the Lord that efficacious grace, which enlarged my heart, and gave me courage and resolution to follow the example of thy most holy life, by a life animated with fervent zeal for perfection.

I now perceive all the occasions, with which thou didst furnish me, for proving this happy disposition of my heart by deeds in the service of God. I see, how it was thyself, who didst secure for me the advantage of a wide field to labor for the salvation of souls, in the

happy vocation, which has prepared me for this blessed home in Heaven, in the glorious communion of the Saints!

O Mary, mother of mercy, and my dearest mother, I now come, in company with all thy ransomed children, to thank thee, not only for having saved me, but also for having saved them, by obtaining for them, as for me, the grace of zeal and final perseverance.

How rejoiced I am now, that I have glorified and exalted thee before men! How delightful is the remembrance of what I have said, and done, and written in thine honor, to propagate and increase a loving devotion to thee!

But how insignificant was all this, in comparison with thy real grandeur, as I now behold thee, adorned with that magnificent diadem wherewith the Holy Trinity encircled thy gracious brow, at the happy moment of thine Assumption into Heaven! How often, on earth, did my heart throb, with the burning desire of St. Stanislaus, to see thee in Heaven, in the full glory of thy majesty! I am now with thee, thanks to thy maternal goodness,

O Queen and most dear Lady! Thanks be to thee for ever, for all the graces thou hast obtained for me, especially for the crowning grace of dying in thine arms! Thanks, thanks to thee, for the gracious welcome thou hast given me to this thy royal court, where I am to share thy glory and happiness for ever and ever! How happy I am that my heart is now laid open before thee, and all the blessed citizens of Heaven, and that I can point to it and say, with joyful confidence: "O dearest and most sweet mother, thou seest how much I love thee!"

We read, in the life of St. Bernard, that, when that holy Religious went to Spire, in Germany, to preach the Crusade, the Emperor Conrad met him, and carried him on his shoulders to the cathedral. The Saint then intoned the *Salve Regina*, adding the triple salutation, by which this antiphon in honor of Mary is concluded. He prostrated himself, at a great distance from the altar, on which a miraculous image of our Lady was exposed, and pronounced the first salutation, "O clement!" He then rose up, advanced farther,

and prostrated himself a second time, pronouncing, in a clear and solemn voice, the second salutation, "O pious!" A third time he advanced and prostrated himself — it was near the altar of the Blessed Virgin — and he intoned the third salutation, "O sweet Virgin Mary!" Thereupon a voice came forth from the miraculous image, which was heard throughout the vast edifice, saluting the Saint, in return, before all the assembled multitude, the nobles of the land and the Emperor himself, and the voice said: "Hail Bernard!" — *Salve Bernarde!*

We may easily imagine what ineffable joy and consolation filled, at that moment, the heart of that highly-favored servant of Mary. But how incomparably greater must be the happiness, and contentment of the blessed soul when, in the Temple of God's glory, and in the presence of all the Angels and Saints, before the throne of Mary, Queen of Heaven, she intones the *Salve Regina:* "Hail, mighty Queen: mother of mercy! life of my life! and sweetness of Heaven! to thee, as the star of the sea, I addressed my supplications amid

the storms of life's troubled ocean; to thee I sighed and lifted up mine eyes, as I wandered, a lonely pilgrim, through the dark valley of tears! Now I am with thee, a sharer in thine everlasting joy. O! thou, the solace of my sorrowful exile, how tenderly are thy loving eyes fixed upon me now! how graciously dost thou vouchsafe to show me thy Divine Son in the splendor of His glory!

"Alleluia! I salute thee with all the homage of my heart, and hasten to throw myself into thine extended arms, to embrace thee, O my heavenly mother! and rejoice, for ever, in thy beatitude, O most clement, most pious, most sweet Virgin Mary! Amen."

And now the blessed soul hears, in return, the salutation and invitation of the Queen of Heaven, her most blessed mother: "Welcome, my happy child, to the kingdom of my glory; what is mine, is thine!"

What a blissful salutation! What a glorious reception! What a jubilee of joy and thanksgiving for the ransomed child thus welcomed to her mother's heart and home!

"O clement, O pious, O sweet Virgin

Mary!" the blessed soul once more exclaims, "Now, at last, I am able to thank thee, and love thee, as my heart so long desired! Now, indeed, I can unite my thanksgiving to thee with that of all the Angels and Saints!"

Pious soul! child of Mary! consider, attentively, this joy of the blessed soul, and if you love Mary, the mother of Jesus, as you ought to love her, you need never say: "We know little of the joys of Heaven."

Heaven shall unite you for ever with Mary in the fullness of her joy and beatitude. What more, O child of Mary, can your heart desire — that heart ransomed by her Son's blood?

Even as Christ bestows on every soul, that enters Paradise, a special nuptial gift of rare magnificence, so, too, does his blessed mother reward her faithful servants with some peculiar glory, on their first appearance at her royal court.

St. Theresa seems to indicate this, when she relates what took place during one of her heavenly ecstasies: "Then Mary," says the Saint, "gave me a particular ornament, and

put on my neck a chain of gold, whereto was appended a most precious and beautiful cross. The gold thereof and the jewels were so different from any we see on earth, that there is no sort of comparison to be made between them. No human mind could imagine their beauty and lustre, or the wondrous substance of which they were formed." *

This gracious welcome, on the part of Mary, is a double consolation to those who have contributed to make her known and loved on earth, that thereby they might save souls for whom that Mother of Sorrows once wept, at the foot of the Cross, and for whose salvation her heart yearned, even in the joy of her heavenly blessedness. If a loving mother, here on earth, feels so grateful to the person who saved her child from imminent peril, or has, in some way, advanced his fortune, and esteems the favor far more highly than if it had been done to herself; how much more highly will this heavenly mother appreciate what we have done, with care, and toil, and trouble to

* Life of St. Theresa, chap. vi.

ourselves, to promote the temporal and eterna. welfare of her deeply-loved children, for whose salvation her only Son died on the ignominious Cross? And, if every magnanimous king, or queen, feels a particular pleasure in rewarding, with a royal munificence, as becomes their lofty station, every act of service; how much more likely will the most tender, and loving Queen of Heaven, that most generous and noble Lady, surpass, in liberality, all earthly sovereigns, when she rewards her faithful servants! Yes! the joyous exclamation: "Behold, dear mother! thy children whom I have saved for thee!" is the surest title to the most plentiful share in the glory and happiness of Mary's eternal kingdom!

There remains but one higher degree of joy to crown the blessedness of the happy soul admitted into the Communion of Saints.

X.

JESUS IN HEAVEN.

Now, in his glory sits enthroned my Lord,
My Saviour-God. O! endless be His praise!
If bliss supreme a portion fell to man,
To Thee be thanks, Redeemer of us all!
Could I, thy ransomed slave, prone at thy feet,
Place there my present powers, my future hopes,
And, praising Thee, expire for lack of more.
How little were this all, when all is Thine
In time and ever more, my God, my all!
Our sole desire, our sole beatitude!

At the conclusion of the Litany, this invocation is thrice repeated: "Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world!" The blessed soul sees now, in His glory, the Lamb of God, who took away the sins of mankind. She sees the twenty-four ancients, in their white robes and their golden crowns, sitting

around the Throne of the Lamb, and they fall down, with one accord, before Him; having, every one of them, harps and golden vials of odors, which are the prayers of the Saints. She hears them singing a new canticle, saying: "Thou art worthy, O Lord! to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; because thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God, in thy blood, out of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and hast made us to our God a kingdom and priests..... And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many Angels round about the Throne, and the living creatures and the ancients; and the number of them was thousands of thousands, saying, with a loud voice: 'Worthy is the Lamb, that was slain, to receive power, and divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and benediction.' And every creature, which is in Heaven, I heard saying: 'To him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, benediction, and honor, and glory, and power, for ever and ever.'" *

* Apocalypse, v.

The blessed soul sings with them, for the first time, this new Canticle of Adoration to the Lamb of God, who has redeemed her, too. Mary herself presents that soul to her Divine Son. What a glorious moment! what a joyful introduction!

"I would that I had seen Jesus on earth!" such was the oft-repeated wish of St. Augustine; and who that believes in Jesus, and loves him, does not cherish the same desire? Who could not wish to have seen him in the manger of Bethlehem? in the Temple confounding the doctors by his astonishing wisdom? in the desert, or on the sea of Galilee, teaching the multitudes that followed Him, thirsting for the Word of Life? Who could not wish to have seen our dear and merciful Lord, when he stood by that tomb in Bethania, and called on Lazarus to come forth from its dark recess? or, when he entered Jerusalem as a conqueror, amid the joyous acclamations of the people? Who could not wish to have seen him, when he instituted the Blessed Sacrament, and offered, for the first time, the unbloody Sacrifice of the New Law? Who

could not wish to have seen Him in his bitter agony on the Cross, when he made atonement for the sins of all mankind, and reconciled a fallen and most sinful race to his heavenly Father? And, above all, who could not wish to have seen Him, when, on Easter Sunday, before the dawn, he rose victorious from the tomb, burst the stony barrier that opposed his passage, and triumphantly intoned the Alleluia of man's Redemption completed at that moment? And who could not wish to have seen Jesus, our Divine Lord and Master, our crucified Redeemer, ascending in triumph, from the top of Mount Olivet, to take his place in majesty, at the right hand of his Eternal Father? Oh! that I had been there to see that sight, and that I, too, could have ascended on the wings of love, to follow my sweet Saviour afar off, up and up, through the blue ether, to the gates of Heaven, that I might see Him enter into glory, after all the sufferings and humiliations He had borne on earth, for my sake! But, if His triumphant entrance into Heaven was, that day, so wonderfully glorious, is the splendor of His glory less to-day, when, by the con-

quests of eighteen hundred years, the souls saved, in all that time, through the merits of His blood, have so wonderfully increased the joys and glories of Heaven, and filled the seats of the fallen Angels?

St. Theresa once saw, in a vision, the glorified hand of Jesus, and immediately she was rapt in ecstasy. She says: "No human tongue can tell the ineffable beauty of that hand." How would the Saint have felt, had she seen Jesus glorified, face to face? Why, the excess of joy would have broken her heart! Who, then, could form any idea of the beauty of His blessed Soul, hypostatically united with the Divine Person of the Son of God, the Eternal Beauty?

What a joyful moment for the ransomed soul, when she sees Him, for the first time, and exclaims, in heavenly rapture: "I behold Jesus, face to face, in His glory, and enter now into His love and beatitude."

How wonderfully glittering on his crown are the rays of His hypostatic union with the Second Person of the Trinity! how ineffably clear and bright shine forth, from that royal crown,

the innumerable and infinite merits of every thought, word, desire, sentiment, prayer and suffering of His whole life, and of His bitter and ignominious death!

The blessed soul adores and wonders; but how ardently does she thank and love that dear Saviour! with what exultation does she exclaim: "Alleluia! now do I behold in their dread reality Thy whole life, passion and death! now do I behold the inestimable value of Thy merits! now do I see the infinite value of the Expiatory Sacrifice Thou didst offer to Thine Eternal Father!

"I see now, unveiled, the wonderful ways of Divine Providence, manifested through Thee, O Jesus! for the salvation of mankind.

"I see how much every soul hath cost Thee, and what Thou hast done for every child of Adam, from the fall of our first parents till the end of Time.

"I see distinctly all the wonderful effects of the interior illuminations, by which Thou, O Eternal Light! hast enlightened every rational soul coming into this world, for the knowledge of truth and the attainment of everlasting life.

"I see all the wonders of grace, which Thou hast wrought—during the countless ages that have passed since the birth of Time—by the preaching of Thy Divine Word, and especially by the worthy administration of the Sacraments, which Thou hast instituted, as so many channels of grace, for the salvation and sanctification of mankind.

"I see the effect of all the Baptisms, which delivered millions of millions from the slavery of the Devil, and made them children of God.

"I see the strength and efficacy of all the Confirmations, which invested Christians with the power of the Holy Ghost, and made them living temples of God.

"Above all, I see, to the great joy and consolation of my heart, the wonderful effects of Thy Real Presence in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar. I see the immense increase of Divine glory, by means of all the holy Masses that have been, and shall be, offered up till the final consummation of things—each one of which glorified Thy heavenly Father more than all the praise and homage of the heavenly hosts, from the Creation till now, and through all eternity.

"I see all the innumerable holy Communions that ever have been, and ever shall be, made: their wonderful efficacy for the sanctification of souls, and the union they foreshadowed with Thee in Heaven, for the eternal joy and contentment of the Blessed, and for Thine own greater glory and happiness, O Eternal Lover of mankind!

"I see the efficacy and power of Thy most precious Blood in the daily, hourly, and innumerable, often-repeated reconciliations of sinners with God, through the Sacraments of Penance and Extreme-Unction—those wonders of spiritual resuscitation, nay, of spiritual creation. I see the sanctification of souls by the gaining of those never-failing Indulgences, granted by the holy Church to her penitent and contrite children; and how every Angel and Saint in Heaven gives praise and thanks for ever to the God of Mercy, for this astonishing exercise of Divine Goodness towards the poor children of Adam.

"I see the torrents of grace flowing forth from Thy Sacred Heart for the elevation, endowment, and sanctification of the ministers

of Thy holy Church, by the Sacrament of Orders. I see how, by virtue of this great Sacrament, and in union with the governing power in Thy holy Church, they are one with Thee, the Eternal High-Priest, as the rays are united with the sun of our earthly firmament. Finally, I see the abundance of grace communicated to mankind, through Thy loving Heart, by the sanctification of Matrimony, and its elevation to the dignity of a Sacrament; and I see, through Thy Incarnation, all mankind raised to an infinitely higher place than it had, even in the state of original justice.

"I now see, and admire, the efficacy and influence of that care and protection, by which Thou hast brought every saved soul to her most happy destination in Thy heavenly kingdom.

"But, above all, I now clearly see how powerfully Thou hast assisted and protected me, in my toilsome journey through this land of exile; by what merciful ways Thou hast conducted me to my everlasting home, and to this throne of glory, which Thou hadst prepared for me from all Eternity.

"How my heart exults in the thought, that, by my salvation thus secured, I can increase Thy glory for ever! Thee, as I now behold, the Father hath exalted above all the Heavens, and given a Name which is above all names—a Name at which every knee should bow, and every tongue confess, that Thou art in the glory of God the Father.

"How graciously has this sweet Name of Thine, with its innumerable blessings, sanctified my life on earth! Blessed be the moment when I first, as a child, moved my lips in Thy praise, and pronounced that most sweet and Holy Name—JESUS! blessed be the moment when I pronounced it with my last breath, as that of the final judge of my salvation!

"Hail, Jesus, my Saviour! I salute and adore Thee, on the throne of Thine Eternal Glory! Now do I see Thee in that magnificent glory of which St. John wrote: 'And on his head were many diadems.' These are the diadems of Thy glorification, as King of all the Angels and of all the Saints, according to their different choirs, whose prerogatives I see in Thy dignity and majesty glorified in a more than kingly degree.

"Here Thou now reignest with that imperial majesty, of which Thou Thyself once saidst, 'To Me is given all power in Heaven and on earth.' I see Thy loins girt with the glorious inscription—'*A King of Kings and Lord of lords.*' And Thy mysterious and most glorious Name: the Word of God—JESUS—the Incarnate Son of God!

"How dazzlingly radiant are the five wounds on Thy glorified Body, O my Saviour! how consoling is the sight of them now to me, as the most illustrious pledges of my eternal happiness: I adore them, with all the Angels and Saints! they admonish me of all I owe to Thee; they remind me, especially, of these five consoling truths: I thought of thee—I saved thee—I protected thee—I directed thee—I LOVE THEE!

"Now I clearly perceive, and fully understand the meaning of those words of the Prophet, and the promise they contain: "'And thou shalt say in that day: 'Behold, God is my Saviour: I will deal confidently, and not fear; because the Lord is my strength and my praise, and he is become my salvation. You

shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains; and you shall say in that day: 'Praise ye the Lord, and call upon his Name; make his works known among the people; remember that His Name is high. Sing ye to the Lord, for He has done great things.'"

"'Alleluia! Rejoice and praise, O thou habitation of Sion—for great is He, that is in the midst of thee, the holy One of Israel.' Now He is ready to communicate to me the fullness of His glory and beatitude!

"For this, O Jesus! my heart has already thanked Thee, when I intoned my joyful *Exultet* as I entered Heaven; but now, what an excess of joy and exultation fills my soul, absorbed, as it is, in the contemplation of Thy beauty, dignity and glory; now that it is given me to embrace Thee, and to enter on this infinite beatitude of Thine, as God—Man!"

Jesus invites the soul: "Come, dearly beloved, enter into My glory; thou hast fought the good fight, thou hast won thy crown; enter thou into My Glory!"

O thrice-blessed meeting of Christ and the

ransomed soul in Heaven! O blessed moment, when that happy soul rests on her Saviour's bosom—thanks Him for the blissful eternity His blood has purchased for her, and enters on the joy and bliss prepared for her from all Eternity! "What is mine, is thine." So, also, does our Lord himself salute the blessed soul; and He places on her head the crown of glory He has merited for her—that crown destined for her, by the Eternal Father, from the beginning of Ages.

"*Pax tibi!*—Peace be with thee!" are the sweet words of Jesus, saluting the blessed soul with the kiss of peace. "Peace shall be with thee for ever—the peace of My love—the peace of everlasting repose—the peace that follows the hard-fought battle, and the dearly-earned victory! Peace is now with thee: no more temptation, no more doubt, no more fatigue, no more trouble, no more affliction, no more sorrow, no more sin, no more sickness, no more danger, no more possibility of imperfection, or remorse of conscience! My peace I give to thee, according to that promise of mine, which I made through the mouth of

my Prophet: 'As I swore, in the days of Noah, that I would no more bring in the waters of Noah upon the earth, so have I sworn not to be angry with thee, and not to rebuke thee. For the mountains shall be moved, and the hills shall tumble, but My mercy shall not depart from thee. O poor little one, tossed with tempest, without all comfort, behold! I will lay thy foundations with sapphires, and I will make thy bulwarks of jaspers, and thy gates of graven stones, and great shall be thy peace, and thou shalt be founded in justice.' Enter into my joy for ever! 'To him that shall overcome, I will grant to sit with Me on My Throne!'"

O soul that lovest Jesus! dost thou begin now to understand what Heaven means!

But for whom shall this invitation of Jesus be more cheering than for a soul that was so happy as to work and toil, and suffer much for Jesus on earth, for the propagation of his holy Faith, and the salvation of souls, for whom he shed His blood? What joy and consolation shall that soul experience which is so happy as to present, to Jesus in Heaven, multitudes of

saved souls, and is able to address Him in these words: "O my blessed Saviour! in return for my soul, which Thou hast redeemed with so great a love, and so much toil and suffering, I bring Thee many other souls. Lord! Thou knowest how much it cost me to bring them to Thee: receive them in token of my eternal thanks and love for Thee!"

Jesus with heavenly sweetness—with the gratitude of a Saviour, the liberality of the Son of God—invites her in return: "For this shalt thou enter into My joy, and the grandeur of My beatitude, as a Saviour of souls!"

Jesus once more embraces the blessed soul, and adorns her with that particular nuptial gift, which shines resplendent in the crown wherewith He has encircled her brow, amid the joyful acclamations of all the Angels and all the Saints, who sing aloud: "Alleluia! Alleluia! another soul is saved! Praise to the Lamb for ever!" Her Guardian Angel then leads her to the throne of glory prepared for her.

XI.

EASTER-MASS IN HEAVEN.

Oh! that the mystery would itself unfold—
  Remove the veil which hides from mortal view
Sublimest bliss, by Angels' voice untold,
  Which yet the Blest for ever shall intue!
When man with his Restorer shall be one—
As with His Father is the Eternal Son!
  O'erwhelming thought that bids us veil our eyes,
  Ecstatic thrill prepared in Paradise!

The sense in which I speak of Mass in Heaven will be better understood by what I am now about to say. I do not for a moment suppose any continuation, in the courts above, of that Unbloody Sacrifice, which is a renewal of the Bloody Sacrifice which Christ, our Lord, for the greater glory of God, and the achievement of Man's Redemption, completed on the Cross, except, in this respect, that this most

glorious and most consoling work of God, in His Militant Church on earth, has, also, a reflection of joy in Heaven. Let us imagine how this may be:

Nine times does the *Kyrie Eleison* resound through the courts of Heaven, in grand and solemn chorus: "Lord, Thou hast had mercy on us! Lord, Thou hast had mercy on us! Christ, Thou hast had mercy on us! Christ, Thou hast had mercy on us!" and so on through the other invocations.

The four-and-twenty Ancients swing their golden vials, and the fragrance of heavenly incense, blessed by Christ Himself, ascends to the Throne of the Almighty.

Jesus, as the Eternal High-Priest, intones the *Gloria* in a voice ineffably sweet and solemn, and, at the same time, the vaults of Heaven resound with the ringing of bells.

Who, that has devoutly assisted at the celebration of Easter, on Holy Saturday, has ever heard, without a glow of joy and sympathetic exultation, the ringing of the bells announcing *Easter?* God alone knows what a foretaste of heavenly joy the true Christian enjoys at

that moment. What, then, shall be the ecstatic joy of the blessed soul, hearing from the heights of Heaven the ringing of those celestial bells announcing Easter-joy for ever?

As there are, according to St. John in the Apocalypse, twenty-four golden vials in Heaven, from which the perfume of heavenly incense ascends to the Throne of God, I would fain suppose, that there are, also, four-and-twenty bells in this glorious chime, which resounds so grandly, so sweetly, so solemnly through the boundless vaults of Heaven.

How well I remember that, being at Vienna, I was wont to make, during the Holy Week, my annual retreat in a convent near the imperial city. There I could hear the chime of all the bells of that immense capital. How solemn an impression did it make upon the meditating soul, when the great bell of St. Stephen's, swung by twelve men, sent forth its mighty peal, whilst all the bells of the countless towers joined in the universal chorus, announcing to the Christian world the Resurrection of the Saviour! What then must be the delight of the blessed souls in Heaven, now

confirmed in grace, and possessing the certainty of their salvation, when they hear the harmonious chime of the bell of the Holy Trinity, the bell of Jesus, the Saviour-God, the bell of the queenly Mary, the bell of St. Joseph, the bell of St. John the Baptist, the bell of St. Michael, the bells of the nine choirs of heavenly Spirits, that is, of the Angels, of the Archangels, of the Principalities, of the Celestial Powers, Virtues, and Dominations, the bell of the heavenly Thrones, of the Cherubim and the Seraphim! And, together with them, the bells of the nine choirs of Saints—the bell of the Holy Innocents, the bell of the holy Virgins, and that of the other holy women who sanctified themselves in the state of Matrimony or in Widowhood; the bell of the holy Confessors, of the holy Priests, and that of the sainted Bishops; the bell of the Patriarchs and of the Prophets, and the bell of the holy Apostles, making in all twenty-four! If each of these bells sounds so sweet and solemn, how grand, how full, how harmonious must be their united chime! The bells of Heaven!—what a chime that must be!

The Heavens re-echo with the glorious strains, and all the nine choirs of holy Angels, taking up the words, intone, in succession, the "*Gloria in excelsis Deo* — Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth to men of good will." And, immediately, the countless multitude of the Saints, with one accord, burst forth and sing: "We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we adore Thee, we glorify Thee. We give Thee thanks for Thy great glory, O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty! O Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son! O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, who takest away the sins of the world, graciously accept our thanks! for Thou only art holy, Thou only art the Lord, Thou only, O Jesus Christ, together with the Holy Ghost, art Most High in the glory of God the Father! Amen."

"*Pax vobis!*—Peace be with you!" so does Jesus, the High-Priest and Saviour, salute all the Angels and Saints.

"We have it, through Thee! Alleluia! praise be to Thy name for ever!" respond the hosts of Heaven.

Jesus intones the *Collect:* "Heavenly Father, who, through My mission, on earth, didst save mankind, and exalt the beatitude of the Angels, receive our eternal thanks for that dispensation of Thy mercy, and grant, that all, who partake of the grace of Redemption, and whom Thou hast given Me, may reign with Me in the everlasting Easter-joy, and with Thee, who livest and reignest with Me and with the Holy Ghost throughout all Eternity." "Amen," respond the choirs of Saints and Angels in a transport of heavenly joy.

The *Epistle* begins: A most sweet and sol emn voice is heard, from the Throne of the Lamb, reminding the Blessed of what God, in His infinite mercy, hath done for the salvation and glorification of all the faithful amongst His rational creatures. And every Saint, in that blessed company, looks in the book of his own life, and reads, and admires therein, the merciful dealings of Divine Providence, which saved him, in the midst of so many dangers, and brought him, victoriously, to the possession of His Everlasting Kingdom. What a joyful and exulting *Deo Gratias* ascends

then to the Throne of the Almighty from those myriads of grateful hearts! And Jesus intones the *Alleluia*. Who could imagine, even for a moment, the joy and exultation with which the Saviour of the world intones the *Alleluia* in Heaven! or yet, the rapturous joy with which the ransomed hosts of the Blessed take up the joyful sounds, so that the courts of Heaven become vocal with their mighty *Alleluia*! And louder yet, and still more solemnly, Jesus intones, for the second and third time, that *Alleluia*, announcing the eternal Easter-joy; and again and again do the choirs of Saints and Angels repeat the rapturous sound; the bells of Heaven peal forth, again, their glorious chime, and the everlasting arches tremble with joy.

The *Gradual* begins, increasing in strength, in proportion, as the choirs of Angels and of Saints ascend higher and higher, singing the praises of God in the words of the Psalmist: "Give praise to the Lord, for He is good, for His mercy endureth for ever."*

* Psalm, cxvii.

"O praise the Lord, all ye nations; praise Him, all ye people, for His mercy is confirmed upon us; and the truth of the Lord remaineth for ever."*

The four-and-twenty ancients swing the golden censers, and the incense, blessed by Christ, floats far and away over the radiant hights of Heaven.

The *Gospel* commences: A voice, ineffably sweet and sonorous, coming from the Throne of the Lamb, sings the Gospel, in tones that resound through the golden vaults of the Heavenly Palace. And the words are:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for now they possess the Kingdom of Heaven.

"Blessed are the meek: for they now possess the land of Paradise.

"Blessed are they that once mourned for God's sake: for now they are comforted with exceeding great joy.

"Blessed are they that hungered and thirsted after justice: for now they are entirely holy, yea, filled with the holiness of God himself.

* Psalm, cxvi.

"Blessed are the merciful: for now they are rewarded by the infinite liberality of God.

"Blessed are they who preserved a clean heart: for now they see God.

"Blessed are the peace-makers: for now, as children of God, they enjoy everlasting peace.

"Blessed are they that suffered persecution for the sake of Christ and justice: for great is now their reward in Heaven."

"Praise be to Thee, O Jesus! Alleluia!" respond the choirs of the Saints.

"To Him be glory and honor for ever!" the choirs of Angels reply.

"I am with you! Alleluia!" so Jesus salutes the Blessed.

"And we are with Thee! Alleluia!" they answer with one accord.

The *Credo* is not sung on Holy Saturday; neither is it sung in Heaven: faith being there transformed into contemplation.

No *Offertory* is said on Holy Saturday; neither is it said in Heaven: for the Blessed are already united with the Lord, and belong to him heart and soul, as living holocausts of Divine Love, in the most perfect union with His Holy Will.

The *Oblation*, however, is made. The Sacred Heart of Jesus, filled with the sentiment of all the Blessed offering themselves through love to the Father, constitutes the Oblation. The signal for this Offertory of love is given. The soft, sweet sound of a silvery bell reëchoes through the Heavens.

The Blessed are burning with desire to be completely united with God, by union with His Divine Essence and Nature, through an intuitive vision of His Infinite perfections, and an essential possession of His Infinite Beatitude; as they rejoice more in the manifestation of His Divine Glory, which results from that union, than in their own beatitude in Him.

When the Lord, one day, said to Thomas Aquinas, "Thou hast written well of Me; what reward wouldst thou have?" Thomas answered: "None other than Thyself." "Show us the Father and it is enough for us." So, also, did Philip express, in the name of the other Apostles, the longing desire of their hearts.

Such, but infinitely higher in degree, is the ardent longing of the Blessed in Heaven, manifested by this Oblation through the Heart of

Jesus. It is the Offertory of that love, which made St. Augustine, even on earth, exclaim: "O my God, I love Thee! I love Thee infinitely more than I love myself; for if I were God and Thou Augustine, I would then wish that Thou wert God and I Augustine!" It is the longing desire for the highest possible glorification of God, so far as we can contribute to it, which made the same Saint exclaim: "O my God, I would that my heart were a lamp and all my bones melted to oil, that I might be entirely consumed, for Thy greater glory, in the flame of Thy love!"

The celestial organ is now heard, accompanying, with the most enchanting harmony, the hymns of thanksgiving, praise, and earnest longing, which the Blessed sing in symphonious concert; and the perfume of the celestial incense again goes up from the four-and-twenty golden vials, and ascends to the Throne of the Almighty.

All the Blessed have harps, and through their golden strings a strain of heavenly music sighs, like the perfumed zephyr through summer leaves. As soon as the organ ceases,

these heavenly harps break forth in one united strain of ravishing harmony, re-echoing the hymns just sung, with the accompaniment of the organ. And the Blessed resume their most affectionate hymns of Divine Love; and their desire is answered by the Lord, and a voice comes forth from the Throne, saying: "Praise ye our God, all ye his servants!" "And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of great thunders, saying: 'Alleluia; for the Lord our God the Omnipotent hath reigned. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give glory to Him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife has prepared herself. And to her it hath been granted that she should clothe herself with fine linen, glittering and white. For the fine linen are the justifications of Saints. Blessed are they that are called to the marriage-supper of the Lamb.'" *

Jesus says: "Be prepared, brethren, to pray and unite yourselves with My Heart, that the

* Apocalypse, xix.

holocaust of your love, through Me, may be acceptable to the Father."

"May the Almighty accept this Oblation of our love through Thee, O Jesus, to His and Thy greater glory, and our own truly divine beatitude in the triune God for ever." "Amen. Alleluia!" reply all the Blessed.

Then does every soul, in the retirement of her own heart, pour forth before the Lord her immense desire to be united with Him in the most perfect degree, according to His Divine Will and Pleasure.

Jesus intones aloud:

"Thanks and glory be to God!"

"From eternity to eternity," answer the Blessed!

"Lift up your hearts to the Father!"

"We have them lifted up with Thine;" the Blessed respond.

"Let us thank Him for every grace."

"It is meet and proper!" answer the Hosts of Heaven in chorus.

Jesus sings the *Preface:* "Verily, it is meet and proper, O heavenly Father, that we give thanks to Thee for every counsel and every

action of Thine Eternal Wisdom, Justice and Mercy. Especially do we thank Thee for the triumph of Thy merciful love, which Thou hast so wonderfully manifested through the Creation, Redemption, and Sanctification of the world, and, above all, by the Glorification of all Thy Faithful amongst the children of men, through My infinite merits, redeemed and reconciled to Thee. Receive, therefore, from all the Angels and Saints who, in union with Me, love and praise Thee—the tribute of our eternal thanks, of our eternal love and adoration. Holy! Holy! Holy is the Lord God of Hosts, the Heavens and the earth are full of His glory."

The choir of the Seraphim sings, and every choir of Angels and of Saints, with increasing power, sings in turn, the same trisagion; and the silvery bell is heard again, clearer and more solemn than ever, giving the signal for the Consecration.

The four-and-twenty Ancients fall down and adore, and the clouds of celestial incense wreathe upwards, in graceful columns, to the Throne of the Omnipotent. Brighter and

brighter stream forth the rays of light from the Heart of Jesus, diffusing themselves in all directions, and filling the Heavens with new and more dazzling radiance. This wondrous light falls on every one of the blessed inhabitants of Heaven, increasing the glory of each, and Jesus speaks: "Father, I pray that these all may be one: as Thou, Father, in Me, and I in Thee—I in them, and they in Me."

The Consecration takes place. Jesus shines forth in every blessed soul, and every blessed soul is transformed into a living likeness of Him.

Christ intones the *Pater Noster:* "Our Father—My Father, who art in Heaven, who hast sent Me to communicate to mankind the knowledge of Thy most holy Name. Thy kingdom is come. All they, that did Thy holy Will on earth, are now here with Thee and Me, in the company of Saints and Angels, saved in conformity with Thy Will. The union with this Thy Holy Will is their delicious bread for ever. They are now one in heart and soul, secure from all temptation, and safe from every shadow of evil. Father, let them

enter into the bliss of Thy love." "Amen," answer all the Blessed, and their loud *Alleluia* peals, like thunder, through the Heavens. The silvery bell again is heard, giving the signal for Communion; and every blessed soul confesses before the Holy Trinity: "I am not worthy to be united with Thee,"—but her heart is, at the same time, all glowing with desire to enter into the most perfect union and communion with God, and utters, with all the fervor of that heart, "All my desire is before Thee, and the sighs of my heart are not hidden from Thee."

Three times is this confession of their own nothingness repeated, and God fulfills the promise: "I am thy reward exceeding great.* ..... And, I shall make them drink of the torrent of my pleasure." † The intuitive knowledge of God is the source of this infinite torrent of pleasure and Divine Beatitude.

"Alleluia! alleluia! alleluia!" The soul enters into essential communion with God, and, in this her transfiguration, she exclaims

* Genesis, xv: 1. † Psalms, xxxv: 9.

in an ecstasy of bliss: "I see the Most Holy Trinity, face to face, and enter into the power and glory of the Lord."

God is the last end for which the soul exists: fire, therefore, does not more naturally unite with fire, nor does the air rush more eagerly into empty space, nor does a millstone, thrown from a great height, hurry with more accelerated swiftness to the earth, nor do the waters cast themselves more precipitately into the foaming cataract, than the soul flies to God—her last end, and seeks to unite herself with Him, who is the centre of her existence.

O blissful, O glorious Communion! "*Alleluia!* Now I enter, by an intuitive vision, into the possession and bliss of the infinite perfections of God. Alleluia! I enter into the infinite Kowledge—the infinite Power—the infinite Wisdom—the infinite Goodness—the infinite Mercy—the infinite Sanctity—the infinite Glory and Majesty—the infinite Beauty—the infinite Beatitude! I enter into God, the Eternal Truth—into God, the essential Life—into God, the essential Love!

"Alleluia! now essentially united with God, I see Him, face to face, by an intuitive vision —Him, who is the Infinite KNOWLEDGE; there is now no more mystery for me. Now I know all in Him—all—all! The unfathomable depths and hidden treasures of His Omniscience are now unfolded before me, like an open book. Oh! what torrents of joy inundate my soul, in the illimitable range of knowledge thus placed within my view—the boundless domain of Science, human and Divine!

"Alleluia! now essentially united with God, I see Him, face to face—Him, who is ALMIGHTY! Now I understand how nothingness itself obeys Him. Now I see, as though I had been present, how the universe started into being, at the first sign of His Almighty Will. Now I clearly see, in His Omnipotence, the primeval cause of all things, and of their existence and subsistence through all the regions of creation. I see, at one glance, in wonderful distinctness, all He has created: the smallest as well as the greatest of beings. Heaven, the starry firmament, and the

beautiful earth are all before me in their grandeur and magnificence. Oh! what torrents of joy overflow my soul at the sight of those wonderful works of Almighty Power—the boundless universe spread before me in all its infinite variety!

"Alleluia! now essentially united with God, seeing Him, face to face, by intuitive vision, Him, who is the Infinite Wisdom, I perceive, clearly and distinctly, the established order of things, their connection one with another, their mutual tendency to His greater glory, and the greater happiness of His faithful creatures. I now see unveiled, and humbly adore, all the eternal counsels and designs of His Wise Providence: how that blessed Providence, with saving hand, took hold of every Angel and of every man of good will, to lead him, by safe and sheltered paths, to his destined home in Heaven.

"I see, especially, the merciful ways, by which this paternal Providence conducted me, poor, weak, erring mortal, to this joyful end of my earthly pilgrimage—this throne of everlasting glory. I now see, distinctly, all the

means which this blessed Providence had chosen, and pre-ordained from all Eternity, for effecting my salvation; and how that salvation was connected with the greatest as well as the smallest events of history.

"I knew not, when on earth, why this or that event took place some thousands of years ago. But I now see how His all-wise hand drew together the innumerable and, to mortal eye, imperceptible threads of events, to weave the wondrous web of my life, connecting this again with the magnificent design of His gracious Providence. How my heart overflowed with unutterable gratitude, seeing these astounding marvels of His Divine Mercy!

"Alleluia! now essentially united with God, and seeing Him, face to face—Him who is the Eternal Goodness—I clearly perceive how all that is good originates in His Infinite goodness as its source; even as the sun gives light to the day, and that light belongs to the sun.

"I see how every creature, even the smallest animalcule, is indebted to that Infinite goodness for every moment of its existence, and for all that sustains its existence.

"I see, in a particular manner, all the numberless gifts of body and mind, prepared for me from all eternity by that Infinite goodness, by which I subsist—all the graces and all the blessings communicated to me, from the first moment of my existence, and how they are to be continued throughout Eternity. Every comfort of my physical life, and, above all, the innumerable illuminations and operations of Divine Grace: all the consolations my heart ever experienced, and shall experience—every help derived from the Holy Sacraments, and all the treasures I ever possessed on earth, as a child of His holy Church—all the aid and comfort I received in Purgatory, by means of the faithful on earth, and all that He Himself now communicates to me in a happy Eternity, where joy and bliss are bestowed with boundless liberality.

"How my heart thanks Him for all this, and what a flood of rapturous joy rolls over my soul, when I think that I can never again be separated from so good a God, so bounteous a Benefactor!

"Alleluia! now essentially united with God,

and seeing Him, face to face, in this intuitive vision—Him, who is the Infinite MERCY, I plainly see, why this His Infinite Mercy permitted the fall of man, that, where sin abounded, grace should overflow.

"I now see, at once and most distinctly, all the incalculable triumphs of this Divine Mercy, in the edifying life of so many converted sinners.

"Above all, I see, clearly, the particular triumph of that Infinite Mercy in my own life, my conversion, sanctification and final salvation. I see how near I often was to the brink of Hell; and how this Infinite Mercy took hold of me, touched my heart, and gave me the grace of conversion and sincere reconciliation with Him.

"I see how this Infinite Mercy, by an election wholly unmerited on my part, separated me from among other sinners. They perished by their own malice, indeed, but it might be that they sinned less than I have done. God has spared me, though He spared not one of the fallen Angels. They sinned only once—I so many times; they sinned only in thought—I

by thoughts, words, actions and omissions. He punished them at the moment of their sin—me He spared for years and years. He gave them not a single grace of repentance—those He bestowed on me are numberless And how many of the men, who are lost, com mitted fewer sins than myself! He spared me, He saved me, by a wonderful dispensation of Divine love, cleansed me from every stain of sin, so that even the sorrowful remembrance thereof was wholly effaced from my soul—my sins being entirely submerged in the ocean of His Infinite Mercy.

"He knoweth even how to turn evil to good, so as to increase my own eternal happiness, and that of others, by the increased zeal for perfection, which follows a true conversion to Him. How my heart now thanks God! and what overflowing streams of happiness inundate my wondering soul!

"Alleluia! now essentially united with God, I see Him, face to face—Him, who is the Infinite Sanctity. Now I clearly perceive that He is the law and rule of all holiness, and I no longer see in my myself even the faintest

shade of evil; but I am entirely holy, because essentially united with the most holy Will of God.

"Now I clearly perceive how all the good I ever thought, desired, spoke or did on earth, originated directly in that Infinite Sanctity of God, as in its source; and how brightly this holiness of God shines forth in each of these virtuous acts which I had the happiness to perform during my mortal life.

"I see now, beyond all doubt, that God, in rewarding my merits, only crowns His gifts, that it was only by His aid I was enabled to do good, and that He does but reward the consent of my free will.

"Now this free will of mine is united for ever with His most holy Will! I can sin no more! O happy impossibility of offending this Infinite Sanctity, even in the slightest degree! What a heaven, in Heaven, for me is this blessed impossibility; and what a joy ineffable is diffused through my soul by the thought of that Infinite Holiness, to whom I give honor, praise, and glory with all the Angels and Saints, intoning, before the Throne

of His Majesty, this sublime, "Holy, Holy, Holy!" and what oceans of Joy inundate my soul as I repeat, with ceaseless adoration, this sweet trisagion!

"Alleluia! Now essentially united with God, seeing Him, face to face, by an intuitive vision — Him, who is the Infinite JUSTICE, I see, and understand, that no devil, or damned soul, ever dared, or ever shall dare, through all eternity, to accuse God's justice.

"Now I see, what on the day of Judgment shall be clearly manifested to all the world, that every one who perished, perished by his own fault; that his destruction was not the will of God; but that, on the contrary, it is His holy Will, that every Angel, and every child of Adam should be saved,—and that God, in punishing them, gives them what they justly deserve.

"I adore and will eternally praise this manifestation of His Infinite Justice, which rejects and consigns to endless torments the rebel Angels, and the equally rebellious men, who despised His holy Law. If His Mercy spared, it was according to the freedom of His Divine

Will. No sinner had, of himself, any claim to such a favor.

"I now see, how His Infinite Justice was entirely reconciled through the infinite merits of Jesus Christ; and I see why Justice and Peace met and kissed over the Cross of Calvary.

"I see, above all, how these infinite merits of Christ reconciled me with that Infinite Justice, which now, through these merits of our Saviour, rewards with infinite liberality the good which I have done with His assistance.

"I now see, that not one thought, or desire, I meritoriously formed on earth, is here overlooked or unrewarded; but, on the contrary, I behold, with what triumph of Divine generosity every one of such thoughts and desires is requited. I never suspected that the reward could be so exceeding great; and, in the full enjoyment of this munificent recompense, my soul is overwhelmed with a new tide of joy and with bliss unfathomable.

"Alleluia! now, essentially united with God, seeing Him, face to face, who is the Infinite Majesty and Glory. I understand how

appropriately the Church prayed, in the words of the Apostle: 'To Him, the King of Ages, the immortal, invisible, only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever!'*

"And why she sings, in the *Gloria* of the Mass: 'We praise Thee, we glorify Thee, we thank Thee for Thy great glory, Lord God, King of Heaven, Almighty Father!' What torrents of joy this Infinite Majesty on which I now enter, diffuses over me, overflowing my soul with ineffable bliss; because, now it is permitted me to give the honor which is due to Thee, O my God! in the company of all the Angels and Saints.

"Alleluia! Now essentially united with God, and seeing Him, face to face, who is the Infinite Beauty, I clearly see that all the beauty of created things was, in comparison with this Divine Beauty, as a drop of dew to a boundless ocean; and I perceive, that all the beauty of the visible creation was but a ray of this increated Beauty. Consider, what joy is comprised in the view of the Infinite Beauty of

* I. Timothy i: 17.

God and the essential union with it. St. Augustine happily said: 'To see and possess God, for one moment only, would be a boundless reward for all the torments endured by all the martyrs.'"

In order to appreciate the justice of this remark, let us examine its truth by means of analogy.

Who is God? He is, as I have said, the Infinite Beauty. Let us now make a comparison. Between the light of the candle and the light of the sun there is a sort of proportion. Myriads of such little twinkling rays would form a sun.

But between the finite and the infinite no proportion, at all approaching equality, can ever exist. The excess on one side would always remain infinite. What is the consequence? God-loving soul! consider and rejoice.

If thou couldst see, at a glance, the whole world, with all its marvellous beauty, and if that beauty should begin to be transfigured before thine eyes,—becoming every moment more beautiful, just as a transparency becomes more bright and beautiful as the light increases,

how beautiful, I ask, would be the aspect of that world—increasing every moment in beauty,—after the lapse of one year, a thousand years, a million of years;—and how would we feel at the sight of such beauty? Yet, if this mundane beauty, thus glorified, should go on increasing throughout eternity, we could never say: "Now the beauty of the world is becoming like unto the beauty of God!" There would still be an infinite difference between it and the infinite beauty of God.

God-loving soul! this Infinite Beauty thou shalt behold, face to face, in Heaven! What ecstatic joy it will be, when the blessed soul first views this Infinite Beauty, and exclaims: "I see the Infinite Beauty of God, face to face, and am essentially united with it! What torrents of joy are diffused over me by the possession of this Infinite Beauty, overflowing my soul with bliss unutterable, and unfathomable!

"Alleluia! Now essentially united with God, who is the Infinite BEATITUDE, I feel and understand that every joy and every happiness communicated by the union and use of creatures,

originates in this Divine Bliss, as its source; and that, compared with this Infinite Beatitude of His, it vanishes into nothing. On what a jubilee of eternal joy do I enter now, for ever, in the Infinite Beatitude of God!!!

Let us again use the comparison we have just made.

Dear Christian soul, if thou couldst now feel in thy heart all the pleasures of all created pleasures put together, and this feeling of joy and pleasure should increase every moment, more and more, what immense happiness would be thine, after the lapse of one year, a thousand years, a million of years! Yet, if that feeling of happiness could go on increasing through a whole eternity, the time should never come, when thou couldst say: "What I now feel is the bliss and beatitude of God." No, there is no proportion, approaching to equality, between the finite and the infinite, and there would, consequently, remain throughout eternity, an infinite difference between finite and Infinite Beatitude. *Yet this Infinite Beatitude we shall possess in Heaven.*

O thrice happy moment, when the blessed

soul, entering the Infinite Beatitude of God, exclaims: "Alleluia! now I am happy in the Beatitude of God, with which I am essentially united for ever and ever. What ecstatic joy pervades my being and overflows my soul.

"Alleluia! now essentially united with God, I rejoice beyond measure, because I see Him, face to face, who is Infinite TRUTH, without a shadow of mutability. What an ocean of joy inundates my soul at the thought of possessing this immutable certainty! Thou art, and shalt remain, GOD throughout all Eternity, without a possibility of change!

"Alleluia! I am essentially united with God, and God is LIFE. Now essentially united with Him, I begin to feel and to understand the relation between my existence and life, and His own. Now I comprehend fully the meaning of those words of the Apostle: 'For in Him we live and move and are.' * I now feel the relation between my life and Immortality. And this my life in God—is Love!

"Alleluia! now essentially united with God,

* Acts, xvii: 28.

who is essentially Love, seeing Him, face to face, and transformed into Him, my heart reposes in Him, for whom it was created. This repose it could find in no created love, but only in Thee, O God! O the joy, the unutterable joy of possessing Infinite Love!

"Alleluia! I am with God! I am in God! I am like God, and live His own life—which is Love and Beatitude itself. And this is to last so long as God is God.

"Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! With every breath I draw, a new light of knowledge flashes on my being; a new bliss is communicated to my soul thus essentially united with God the Father, and God the Son, through the Holy Ghost, for all Eternity."

Now, what is the meaning of this essential *Union* with God, which we have so often mentioned?

It means that the soul, as the image of God, is united with God, its Divine Prototype, in one and the same existence.

It means that the blessed soul is, in Heaven, united more closely with God, than one flame is with another, light with air, or wax with wax when melted together.

It means infinitely more than any comparison can represent.

It means, in a word, that the soul, by her essential union with God in the light of Glory, becomes almost another God made by God.

The Roman Catechism justifies the use of this strange expression, and, if there be any comparison which conveys, at once, to our mind, a clear idea of the effect of this essential union with God in the light of glory—it is precisely the one of which the Roman Catechism makes use. It says: "As iron, in fire, receives itself the fire, and becomes fire itself, without losing its nature, and yet appears an entirely different substance, namely, fire: in a similar way the soul transformed into God, by the light of glory in Heaven, whilst it remains creature, yet looks like God."

O Holy Church! hast thou not said too much? Not so: open the Sacred Volume, and consider what St. John affirms in his Epistle: "Dearly beloved, we are now the sons of God, and it has not yet appeared what we shall be. We know that when He shall appear, we shall be like to Him, because we

shall see Him as He is.* The Roman Catechism concludes, from this very text, that, in Heaven, we shall see God in His Nature, which could not be the case, unless we were essentially united with Him. The Roman Catechism infers, moreover, that the blessed soul, by this transformation in the light of glory, shall look more like God than a new creature, as (to follow up the comparison) an iron, in the fire, looks more like fire than like iron. Even Christ Himself assures us: "It is written in the Law: 'I said you are gods,' and the Scripture can not be made void."*

Hearest thou this, God-loving soul? Christ Himself affirms that thou shalt one day be like God. Needest thou ask, then, what Heaven means?

We might make use of another very appropriate and striking illustration concerning this future state of the blessed soul in Heaven. It is this: Suppose a man chanced to look at a mirror, at the moment when some person entered the room; and suppose the mirror to

* I. John, iii: 2. † John, x: 35.

be so placed, that the man could not see the person entering, but only the image reflected in the mirror. If such a man were asked, who it was that came into the room; if the person be known to him, he would immediately answer, "my father"—"my mother"—"my brother," or whoever it might be. The image of that person reflected in the mirror is not the person himself, but it is a likeness of him, which seems identified with him; and if that person could also communicate his life to that likeness—which, after all, must ever remain a mere likeness—we, in some sense, could point to it and say, "That is he!" After such a manner shall God, one day, be united with his living likeness, the soul, in Heaven—united with her in life and in bliss. There the words of St. Paul shall be literally fulfilled: "But we all, beholding the glory of the Lord, with face uncovered, are transformed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the spirit of the Lord." *

O Heaven! what shalt thou make of us!

* II. Corinthians, iii: 18.

There shall be, one, day, in this way, as many gods in Heaven as there are blessed souls!

Brethren, children of the holy Church, such a Heaven awaits us, such a Divine Eternity! Should not every human heart, filled with the most glowing desire of Heaven, exclaim with the royal Psalmist: "Who will give me wings like a dove, and I will fly, and be at rest? * ..... As the hart panteth after the fountains of waters, so my soul panteth after Thee, O God! My soul hath thirsted after the strong living God; when shall I come and appear before the face of God." †

My God and my Creator! when shall I be united to Thee, as my heart longs with every throb it gives, and my soul with every power it possesses? Day and night, and at every moment of my life, is it the desire of my heart, the expectation of my soul, to go and find repose in Thee! When shall it be allowed me to exclaim: "I am one with Thee, my God and my Love! and that for ever, to Thy greater glory?"

* Psalm, liv. † Psalm, xli.

In Heaven, this inexpressible longing of the human heart is fully and completely satiated: the soul is one with God—and this is the Communion of the Easter-Mass in Heaven.

The Blessed are all merged in the intuitive vision, and in the union with God. Praise! Thanks! and Love! These are the three aspirations before God, in this blessed union with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. The personal union of the Blessed with Christ, gives to these aspirations an almost infinite value, and imparts to them the character of a really Divine Worship. If the union with Christ on earth, in the Blessed Sacrament, was so indescribably wonderful, that every one, embracing Christ in his own heart, could exclaim: "I live, but not I, Christ is living in me," what shall we say, or think of the completeness and intimacy of that union with Christ in Heaven, where, by His hypostatic Union with the person of God, the Son unites the whole creation, but especially our human nature, in a perfect and most intimate union with the Creator?

The bliss of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

penetrates through all the hearts of the Blessed: the pulse of His Beatitude is the pulse of theirs. And, on the other hand, the bliss of all the Blessed is streaming back on the joyful Heart of Jesus, like so many torrents of ineffable Beatitude. This mutual bliss is the kiss of peace, given by the Lamb of God, and imparted, through the mutual exchange of joy, to every citizen of the heavenly Country, thus uniting all the Blessed in Jesus Christ, and, through Him, in the most Holy Trinity.

And how long, think you, do the Blessed remain in that entrancing Communion of the Easter-Mass?

We know that holy souls, on earth, persevered, for hours after their Communion, in these aspirations of Thanks, Love and Adoration; and that such hours passed away, for them, like minutes. How long, then, to speak in a human way of succession in Eternity, how long, think you, shall the Blessed remain lost in the unfathomable depths of Divine Bliss—bound by the sweet and powerful cords of that union with God, the Infinite Beauty,

Beatitude and Love? May we not suppose that, in such a state, ages pass like minutes?

Finally, at a signal given by Christ, the celestial organ peals forth, the Blessed awake from their long lethargy of joy, and the celebration of the Easter-Mass is concluded, and followed by the Vespers in Heaven

XII.

VESPERS IN HEAVEN.

With raptures we the beauteous earth admire,
When clad in vernal green,
Whilst Faith and Hope our gladdened souls inspire
With thoughts of the Unseen.
Yet higher far our hymns of Praise must rise,
Above yon glorious skies,
For that God there in grandeur placed His Throne,
Where He, by Love, with perfect bliss can sate His Own.

In the thirty-fourth chapter of Exodus, we read of Moses, that his face was radiant, after he had spoken with the Lord, face to face, in private conversation; so that he was obliged to cover himself with a veil, before he could speak with the people, or suffer them to behold his countenance, all radiant and bright with the glory of the Divinity. How wonderfully bright and beautiful must the Blessed in

Heaven appear, after this union and communion with God; and with how great a joy and exultation do they three times intone the *Alleluia*, the anthem which the Church uses on Holy Saturday, when she concludes the Mass with Vespers.

"O praise the Lord, all ye nations: praise Him, all ye peoples;" so the holy Angels sing, "for His mercy is confirmed upon us, and the Truth of the Lord remaineth for ever." And all the Saints respond with joyful hearts: "Glory be to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen." "Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!" shout all the Angels and Saints together, and the Heavens tremble again with the chorus of their joy.

A voice from the Throne of the Lamb is heard intoning the antiphon: "This is the day which the Lord hath made; let us be glad and rejoice therein." *

Mary, on her heavenly throne, intones the *Magnificat:*

* Psalm cxvii.

"My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

"Because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid; for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me Blessed.

"For He that is mighty hath done great things to me: and Holy is His Name.

"And His mercy is from generation unto generations, to them that fear Him.

"He hath showed might in His arm; He hath scattered the proud, in the conceit of their heart.

"He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble.

"He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He hath sent away empty.

"He hath received Israel His servant, being mindful of His mercy.

"As He spoke, through Christ His Son, to me; and to all His faithful servants for ever."

Mary, in the presence of all the Angels and Saints, thus yields her tribute of praise and thanks to the Most Holy Trinity; but, at the same time, before all the Blessed, she thanks Jesus, her Divine Son, for the innumerable

tokens of love and kindness wherewith He has so bountifully favored her, from the moment of His Incarnation in her chaste womb.

In union with her, the Blessed sing their "Glory be to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost;" and they contemplate once more, as in a mirror, all the measureless gifts and graces, which the Lord hath communicated to Mary. They magnify her, and, with her, thank the Most Holy Trinity: The Father, who has chosen her for His dearly-beloved daughter; the Son, who has chosen her for His dearly-beloved mother; and the Holy Ghost, who has chosen her for His dearly-beloved spouse.

The Blessed, at the same time, see and understand more clearly than ever, how faithfully Mary coöperated with every grace she received, for the greater glory of God; and they thank the Most Holy Trinity for the all-surpassing glory which distinguishes Mary, and exalts her above them all, at the side of her Divine Son.

They also perceive, in the clearest light, all the innumerable graces which every blessed

soul received from the Lord, through Mary. They see, how they all are indebted to her, after God, for their salvation and beatitude; and how the merciful Providence of God, truly admirable in all its ways, connected with the election, exaltation, and glory of Mary, their own election, exaltation, and glory.

If the remembrance of that beneficent dispensation of Divine Providence, which so arranged the ways of God, that every one has to look to Mary as the Star of Salvation, has so filled the hearts of the Faithful, on earth, with love for their heavenly Mother, that they are for ever animated with the most ardent desires; 'What shall I give to the Lord for all he hath given to me, through Jesus and Mary?' How much more ardently is the blessed soul, in Heaven, after its ineffable union with God, moved to sing the praises of this Blessed Mother, in unison with the Angels and Saints!

A voice from the Throne of the Lamb is eard, inviting all the Blessed, to unite their voices in thanksgiving to Divine Providence, saying: "To Him alone, the Triune God, be honor, thanksgiving, and glory, through Jesus

Christ His only-begotten Son, through Whom He has now accomplished His promise: 'And I shall be their God, and they shall be My People.'"

And all the Blessed, with unanimous voice, intone the *Magnificat:* every soul, in perfect concord with all the others, giving praise, honor, and thanks to Divine Providence, so wonderfully glorified in their salvation.

I fancy, this glorious *Magnificat* of all the Saints, according to their different choirs, is sung in that style which, in music, is called canon: in which, whilst one part, alternately, sings the *theme*, the others play the accompaniment. The music of their golden harps again mingles with the celestial incense of the four-and-twenty golden vials wreathing upwards to the Throne of the Eternal. And again the anthem is sung: "This is the day which the Lord hath made: let us be glad and rejoice therein. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!"

Christ salutes the Blessed: "I am with you. Alleluia!"

"And we with Thee, through all eternity. Alleluia!" respond the choirs of Saints and Angels.

Jesus sings the last prayer, the Post-Communion: "Heavenly Father, who, through the Holy Ghost, for the sake of My infinite merits, makest all Thy faithful children partakers of Thine own bliss, they all offer to Thee, through Me, their eternal thanks, to Thy greater glory, who livest and reignest with Me and the Holy Ghost, for ever and ever."

"Amen. Alleluia!" answer all the Blessed.

"I am with you," Jesus sings.

"And we with Thee," answer the Blessed.

A voice from the throne of the Lamb is heard singing the *Ite Missa Est.* Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

"*Deo gratias*—thanks be to God! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!" re-echoes through the Heavens: the joyful answer of the Angels and the Saints.

Christ blesses them all. A voice is heard from the Throne of the Lamb: It recites, with infinite sweetness and solemnity, the last Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and

without Him was made nothing that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men," to enlighten them, to make them serve God, to render them happy for ever. They are now here, all they who, by their life, gave testimony to Him. He, the Saviour of the world, opened Heaven for them again. He came unto His own, and they received Him, and gave Him all they had; they belong to Him, and He hath given them the right to be called children of God. "And the Word, which was made flesh, dwells now among us, and we see His glory, as the glory of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." "Amen. Amen. Amen." Answer all the Blessed; and the Easter Mass is finished.

Jesus intones the *Te Deum;* the Angels and Saints sing it alternately. All these glorious voices, singing in unison, form, as it were, a swelling ocean of harmonious praise and thanksgiving, and, blending with the mighty tones of the organ, and the thundering peal of the bells, they ascend, in one magnificent volume of sound, to the Throne of the

Eternal Father. The celestial arches tremble again with joy, and even in the depths of hell is heard, faintly and far away, the chime of those heavenly bells. And the fallen spirits, the dogs of hell, howl, and the damned gnash their teeth in the agony of despair, as they are tortured afresh with the excruciating pain of loss.

The Blessed continue their glorious *Te Deum*, their voices flowing together like so many silvery streams, till they reach the verses which specially honor Christ, and they thus conclude: "Thou sittest at the right hand of God, in the glory of the Father, through whom our salvation was accomplished, and with whom we reign for ever and ever. Alleluia!"

"Let us praise the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost!" sing the Angels.

"Let us praise and greatly magnify them through all eternity. Alleluia!" respond the Saints.

Jesus sings the prayer: "Heavenly Father, whose mercies are without number, whose glory is infinite, and who fulfillest, with bounteous liberality, every desire of Thy children,

I thank Thee, with all those whom Thou hast give to Me, for all Thy divine gifts; and, with them, I give Thee praise and honor, that Thou mayst dispose them for the coming joys of a blissful eternity." "Amen. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!" the Blessed reply, in joyful chorus.

The Angels now chant the *Regina Cœli*. The glory of Mary shines with ever-increasing splendor. She is clothed with the sun of glory, and crowned with a starry diadem.

"Rejoice, Queen of Heaven!" sing the Angels, "because He, whom thou hast been found worthy to bear as thy Son, has penetrated Heaven, and much increased our celestial joy for ever and ever. Therefore, unite with us in praising God, who hath done such great things for thee!"

"Rejoice!" the Saints continue, "rejoice, because the Lord of Glory, thy Son, is verily the blessed Saviour, through whom we now triumph in eternal bliss. Alleluia!"

Jesus now thanks his Heavenly Father, who hath given him Mary as his Mother; and He thanks her, before all the Angels and Saints,

for the tenderness and fidelity, with which she assisted Him in the work of Redemption, as the true Eve of the New Covenant. He congratulates her, because she now enjoys such immense glory, seated at his side as Queen of Heaven, and as his most dear and most august Mother. Jesus embraces her, and all the Saints together pray:

"Heavenly Father, who, by the infinite merits of our Lord and Saviour, and especially through his Resurrection and Ascension, hast united us in the bliss of Easter-joy, receive our eternal thanks, for that we, with Jesus and Mary, are now partakers of this boundless joy, to Thy greater glory; through the same Christ our Lord, who, with Thee, O Father! and the Holy Ghost, reigneth for ever and ever. Amen. Alleluia!"

Mary, now, as the Mother of God and Queen of Heaven, blesses the whole assembly of the Angels and Saints.

This, dearly-beloved soul, is Easter-joy in Heaven, as far as we can consider it under the form of divine worship,—as typified and prefigured by the rites, wherewith the Church

celebrates Easter on earth. This heavenly Easter-festival includes, moreover, a most glorious reflection of all the ineffable joys of the other festivals, which we celebrate here below, as children of the Church Militant: such as the festival joys of Christmas, of Pentecost, of Corpus Christi, of the Feasts of Our Lady, and of all the Saints; because Easter reminds us of the mysteries of the Redemption, and is, as it were, the centre of them all.

XIII.

THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS, AS IT IS IN HEAVEN.

Oh! the joys of ever dwelling
Where the Angel-choirs are swelling
Hymns of endless jubilee,
God-Creator, unto Thee!
Where no thought of pain or sorrow—
Anxious dread of the to-morrow—
Mars the fullness of delight,
Grates the ear or shocks the sight:
Where the senses are at rest,
In communion with the Blest!

Are there other joys in Heaven besides those that have an immediate relation to the Divine Service? Yes, there are.

Let us now contemplate them.

As the children of the Church, on earth,

honor God at Easter, and on other festivals, not only by public worship, but by the enjoyment of innocent pleasures, so also do the Children of the Church in Heaven. These pleasures they use according to the Will of God, and to His greater glory, abiding always in His presence and the beatific vision, as we walk in the light of day, and are by it illumined and invigorated, even though we do not always uplift our eyes to the gorgeous firmament and the refulgent day-star. God having given us our existence, precisely such as we are, He endowed us with definite faculties, which have not only relation to Him, but also to created beings. Hence it is decreed, in the order of His Divine Providence, that these faculties should have, in Heaven, their corresponding beatitude in the possession of interminable joys.

Now, what is the nature of these joys?

On one side, the Apostle answers: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what things God hath prepared for those who love Him." But, on the other hand, he ex-

horts us to consider the heavenly joys, by means of comparison, as far as we can do so. "We see now, as through a glass, darkly." This means that we can not, in fact, form any clear conception of Heavenly things, but that yet we may conceive some idea of the coming bliss,—faint, indeed, but, nevertheless, clear enough to increase in our heart the love of heavenly things, and to inspire us with an efficacious desire to reach Heaven, where we may obtain for ourselves a place in the highest of those heavenly mansions, where joy and peace for ever dwell.

The leading principle, in the contemplation of heavenly joy, is this, that, whatever is real joy in God, here on earth, is such also in Heaven,—but in an infinitely higher, more perfect and more glorious way. The Scripture often speaks of Heaven, as the *Kingdom of Joy:* this confirms the assertion, that we can contemplate, in Heaven, every created joy we know,—but in the light which Faith gives us, for the consideration of things divine. These joys, on earth, are, noble qualities of the mind, beauty of body, health, riches, the splendor

and magnificence of the world around us, and, in a social point of view, nobility, civilization, conversation, music, intercommunion of knowledge and of joy, friendship and mutual love.

Now, how are we to consider all these joys in Heaven? I answer, as being *Heavenly*. I contemplate all these joys, in an infinitely higher degree, and in a more spiritualized manner, as reflecting the glory of God, and His worship.

XIV.

THE GIFTS OF THE GLORIFIED BODY AND SOUL, AND THE MAGNIFICENCE OF THE HEAVENLY PARADISE.

"Old things have passed away." That mortal frame,
Whose wondrous make filled us with reverent awe,
And the Creator's plastic Hand bespoke,
Now brighter still with light supernal gleams.
Agile, impassive, subtile, ether-like,
In harmony Divine responsive chimes
To Thought and Will of its great Spirit-Life;
And what was erewhile scope of Faith and Hope,
Is seen and known in the Original Source
Of all that is, that was, or e'er shall be.

As regards the beauty of the glorified body after the Resurrection, no earthly beauty can at all compare with it, nor can imagination

conceive its surpassing splendor. The Holy Scripture mentions, particularly, four of these incomparable qualities of a glorified body, namely: "Spirituality, Lightness, Brilliancy, and Incorruptibility.*

By the quality of *Spirituality* we understand the subtility, the glorified beauty, and admirable perfection of the resuscitated body.

By the quality of *Lightness* we understand, that the body of the Blessed shall have no weight, and can obey, instantaneously, the volition of the will in moving from place to place.

With regard to the quality of *Splendor* or *Brilliancy*, Jesus himself declares: "Then the just shall shine like the sun in the Kingdom of their Father." In the same manner, the Blessed Virgin told St. Bridget, "that the Saints shall shine before the Throne of God, as so many stars of incomparable brightness."

By reason of the quality of *Incorruptibility*, the glorified body is free from all the elements of destruction, pure, perfect and wholly imper-

* I. Corinthians, xv.

ishable, and is penetrated with a sense of delight, which God alone can communicate to a corporeal creature. These bodies are, at the same time, indissoluble. Death shall be for them no more.

Let us remember, what I have before stated, with regard to that vision of St. Theresa, wherein she was favored with a sight of the glorified Hand of Jesus, which filled her with such delight, that she fell immediately into an ecstasy. And, yet, she saw not that Divine Hand in all its glory. A similarly glorious transformation awaits every glorified body in Heaven; because, as the Apostle declares, they are all formed after the prototype of Christ's glorified Body.

In regard to the qualities of the mind, I say: If the beauty of the soul, in the state of grace, is so exceeding great on earth, how incalculably greater must be the beauty of that soul in the state of glory? Here the soul does not see her own beauty; there she knows herself, as she is known, as St. Paul says; and the glorification is accompanied with an unspeakable bliss in every power and every faculty of her being.

What joy it must be for the glorified *intellect* to see God, face to face, and to know *all* in Him! When we consider, even, the limited bounds of purely human science, what exquisite pleasure, and how great a satisfaction, it would give us to master all its different branches: Philosophy, Physics, Astronomy, Medicine, Botany, Mechanics, and all the rest, together with all the arts, and all the Languages spoken by the countless races of men — to be able to converse with people from every part of this habitable globe; — to possess the gift of Poetry and all the graces of Rhetoric; and to know the history of mankind, in all its divisions and subdivisions. Should not any one, in possession of all these treasures of the mind, feel happy! ay, happier far than Solomon with all his science. And what is all this knowledge compared with that of the Blessed, who know all in God, without the toil of study?

What joy for the *Memory*, which now recalls nothing save what is pleasant and consoling!

What joy for the *Will*, which is now one with the Will of God, and is all merged in the love of God, with whom it is essentially united!

Indeed, no eye ever saw, nor ear heard, nor human heart conceived what God hath prepared to reward the virtues of His faithful servants in their state of glory. What joy for the Saints, to see themselves, and all the others in this their glory, and to partake of each other's happiness by the communion and interchange of mutual love!

How magnificent is the flood of light which the sun sheds upon the world! How insufferably radiant would that light be, were a hundred suns to shine in the firmament, or even a hundred thousand suns! Now, Christ Himself affirms, that every Saint in Heaven shall shine like the sun. What shall it be, then, when the countless myriads of the Blessed shall be united in Heaven, and every one of them, like a sun, shedding light and joy on all the companions of his glorious life in the heavenly Jerusalem!

As regards riches and possessions, power and dominion, every blessed soul has a right to exclaim: "Heaven is mine! all is mine!" There they sit, each on a throne of glory, reigning with Christ for ever Far below they

see the hostile powers they have vanquished, and the dominion of all creatures is given them, as heirs of the kingdom of God.

Each particular soul, amongst the Blessed, feels an all-surpassing, an ineffable delight in the possession of that particular glory, by which God distinguishes her amongst all the other Saints, and which is precisely the one most conformable to her own desire.

As for the beauty and magnificence of the heavenly Paradise; we have already observed that, according to the Holy Scripture, it far exceeds all earthly comparison. This is confirmed by the revelations made to the Saints. St. Dorothea, as we read in the authentic Acts of her Martyrdom, sent from Heaven to Theophilus, by an Angel, some flowers, which the pagan had no sooner looked upon than he was converted. St. Didacus, being in an ecstasy, exclaimed with rapturous joy: "O those beauful flowers of Paradise! O those beautiful flowers!"

When the sight of earthly flowers had power to move St. Ignatius, and other Saints, to praise God in his works, how immeasurably higher

will the sight of the Elysian fields above, in the bloom of their eternal beauty, elevate the hearts of the Blessed, and fill them with ineffable joy!

But if, even in regard to such minor objects, the pleasure of the Saints in Heaven will be so great in the possession of created goods, what shall we say of the joy communicated to them by the possession of all those wonders of Divine Power, so gloriously manifested in the heavenly creation, that the sight of them shall fill with ever-increasing admiration even the highest angelic Spirits for all eternity?

What rapturous joy must the Blessed feel when, after the celebration of the Divine Easter-service, they roam together through the boundless plains of Heaven, ravished, at every step, by the endless variety of those stupendous wonders of Divine Power, Wisdom and Goodness—all which they examine and contemplate at leisure, uniting their pleasure and admiration with continual praise and thanksgiving!

What vast journeys men undertake on earth; how much fatigue, toil and privation they cheerfully undergo; what sacrifices they

make, and to what dangers they expose themselves—merely to enjoy for a few hours, or at most a few days, the beautiful scenery of some favored land—to contemplate some glacier's icy waste—to admire the grand panorama outspread beneath some mountain's lofty brow—or the gorgeous palaces and stately walls of some royal city! And how many times are the pleasures of such a journey impeded and counteracted by sickness and various other accidents! Such shall not be a journey in Heaven.

Without any sort of fatigue, and with the swiftness of thought, the Blessed move through the Heavens, and are every moment surprised by the sight of new wonders of beauty and magnificence; because God is not only mighty enough to create infinitely more than man can ever imagine, but He can call into being infinitely more than even St. Michael, and all the Angels in Heaven, could conceive.

Considering only the beauties of Nature and of Art on this earth of ours, how delightful would it be if we could, at pleasure, without either danger or fatigue, behold all the cities

of the earth, and all its scenes of grandeur and of beauty! One moment admiring, in Rome, the wondrous symmetry and unequalled splendor of the Church of churches, and the grand basilica of the imperial ages—the next, gazing with delight on the beautiful Bay of Naples; now, viewing the architectural splendors of London and Paris, and again those of Constantinople and Vienna. Then, with the same power of the will, looking forth from the highest summit of the Himmalayas, or from the top of Chimborazo, in South America—viewing now Mexico, now Australia, then, swift as thought, winging one's flight to the sun, the moon, or the stars; and all this without trouble or danger of any kind, penetrating even the hardest metal with the lightness and ease of a spirit! Now, in Heaven, the Blessed will move with just such ease and swiftness; and what wonders of beauty and magnificence shall open before them on every side, and invite their attention! O happy life in Paradise!

Above all, how grand, how glorious are those celestial *mansions* of which Christ

speaks—which, like castles and palaces of surpassing splendor, stand, in admirable order, around the City of God, throughout the whole extent of the heavenly kingdom!

What ravishing joy is communicated to the soul by the possession of all these wonders!

XV.

SOCIAL JOYS IN HEAVEN.

Oh! mourn we not for them that took their flight—
Sped to the distant land of the Unknown;
For still they live, 'mid transports of delight,
Though far away: nor dwell they there alone.
Each gift this earth calls true, or good, or fair,
Now, with perfection crowned, they gather there.
Each social joy, which mortal eye admired,
Each bliss, to which the longing heart aspired,
Is satisfied, when reign the Saints above
In holiness, in wisdom, and in love.

I have said that, here on earth, our hearts are especially delighted with those pleasures which arise from our social relation to others.

The prerogatives, which render our intercourse with others most agreeable, are, beauty, refinement, virtue, learning, high position, and the ties of affinity, friendship, and love.

To speak in general terms of the joys of conversation: how happy should we feel, and what pleasure would it afford us, if, here on earth, we could converse, when and as often as we pleased, with all the learned men of the whole world and of all ages, supposing ourselves to be as well versed in knowledge as the most learned amongst them?

Could we thus converse, at will, with Solomon and Plato, St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, and all the Philosophers, Theologians, Artists, and Classic Authors of ancient and modern times: how immeasurably great would be our joy and satisfaction! and what would be our delight, were we to find ourselves in conversation with all those Saints and venerable persons, mentioned in Sacred and Ecclesiastical History: now conversing with Adam and Eve, with Abraham and Moses, and John the Baptist; again, with St. Paul, St. Ignatius, St. Francis Xavier, or St. Theresa? Yet, infinitely greater will be the delight of our social communion with all the Angels and Saints in Heaven—even with JESUS, with MARY, and St. Joseph.

Now, all the Blessed in Heaven are endowed with the noblest and most endearing qualities in an unspeakably higher degree than even the best and greatest of men on earth.

As regards the Angels; who could form any idea of the beauty of an Angel? of the nobility of his angelic nature, the profundity of his wisdom, the perfection of his sanctity, the ineffable sweetness of his conversation, the bliss of his beatitude, or the ardor and intensity of his love? What rapturous joy, then, must the blessed soul experience when she first converses, face to face, with her Guardian Angel, and all the other Angels in turn! If it be such a delightful pleasure for us, earthly creatures, to converse with a cheerful, amiable, well-instructed and most virtuous person, a mortal like ourselves; how incomparably greater will be our joy in the companionship of myriads of Angels! May we not think, that in such society, with an ever-increasing interchange of knowledge and affection, ages will seem like hours?

The same must be said with regard to the conversation of the Saints; but, it seems to

me, that our intercourse with them shall be more delightful still, since they are of our own nature—have undergone the same trials and temptations with ourselves, and enjoy the same species of glorification—so that we may truly call them our dear brethren and sisters in Adam. In Heaven, they are all distinguished by ineffable beauty, both of body and soul; they are enlightened with the knowledge of God—are all holy, all love for us, and long to communicate to us the fullness of their beatitude.

We read in the Lives of the Saints, that, even on earth, the conversation of the Saints made men forget sleep, nourishment and all the other wants of life—nay, that the delights of such intercommunication of divine knowledge and divine love elevated pious souls, even to the state of ecstasy. So it was that St. Theresa, inside the grating of the parlor in her convent, and St. John of the Cross outside, were both found in an ecstasy, into which they had been thrown by their conference on spiritual matters. The delight of conversing on things divine, and the reciprocal communica-

tion of the ineffable joy they experienced, in their union with God, absorbed their whole hearts and every affection of their souls in ecstatic love for Him.

Such, too, was the delight of St. Anthony and St. Paul, the first hermit; of St. Benedict and St. Scholastica, in each other's conversation, that it made them utterly insensible to the claims of nature as regards nourishment and sleep.

But how limited and imperfect is the pleasure of such intercourse on earth! — how often is it interrupted by want of time and opportunity, by the inadequacy of language to express ideas, or by sickness, and many other causes! No such hindrances exist in Heaven.

What a joyful satisfaction will it be, to know and understand the lives of the Saints, their interior as well as their exterior, just as they are known to themselves! And, above all, what joy will it be to find ourselves again united to those we loved on earth, those whom we sanctified and saved by our conversation, our pious exhortations, or other spiritual assistance! How they will thank us then,

for having been instrumental in their salvation.

If our intercourse with each particular Saint be so delightful, what will it be, when many Saints — yea, all the Saints and all the Angels, too, are, according to our heart's desire, our companions for ever!

Again, on earth, our social intercourse is necessarily limited by space and time. Not so in Heaven. There, too, an interchange of thought takes place, without having recourse to words,—though words may be used at pleasure, as the medium of expression. In this blessed communion of the Saints, how swiftly pass the ages!—how unnoticed the flight of time!

XVI.

CELESTIAL MUSIC.

Strains of purest harmony,
  Hark! in liquid numbers flow,
Sounds which earth-born melody
  Never uttered, ne'er did know!
All the music of the spheres—
  All the thoughts of joy and love—
All the tones of hopes and fears,
  Are but echoes, faint and low,
  Of the choirs in realms above.

Words are not the only medium of thought and feeling here on earth. Music is also employed, and most effectively, to express the different emotions of the human heart. So it is, also, in Heaven.

That music exercises a most powerful influence over the heart of man, and that a solemn and sublime strain of music may elevate the

soul to the very Throne of the Deity, many of us know by sweet experience. But how limited and imperfect is our enjoyment of sweet sounds on earth!

There are persons that have a talent for music, but yet have no voice, or possess no power to master an instrument, so as to give expression, in musical sounds, to the conception of their own mind. They need the assistance of others, which they can not always obtain. And, moreover, where is the composer who can himself play all the instruments necessary to complete the harmony and give the full compass of his own composition? I do not believe, that either Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, or any other of the great masters, ever heard their own music executed as they had conceived it in their minds.

If those great composers had possessed the perfect command of all the instruments, for which they wrote the several parts; and had they been able, by their own will, to give to all the voices, and all the instruments, the power, flexibility, consonance and resonance which their fancy desired, what an astonish

ingly different effect would the music have had on themselves and all those that heard it!

Let us imagine, moreover, if those great composers had all been in the same place, at the same time, and if every one of them had communicated to the same composition the particular quality and excellence of his own genius, how admirable would such a composition have been—executed under the joint direction of so many great masters! Is it too much to imagine that, in Heaven, every blessed soul exercises the same unbounded dominion over the world of sound?

This is the joy to which even the Holy Scripture more than alludes. Thus St. John tells us, in the Apocalypse, that he saw the four-and-twenty Ancients with harps in their hands, and he heard the voice of a mighty multitude, that sang a new canticle to the sound of those harps; and again, he heard the multitude of the Blessed singing together the Canticle of Moses, the servant of God.*

The very nature of music explains its

* Apocalypse, xiv, xv.

influence on the heart, and indicates its existence in Heaven.

What is music? Harmony. What is harmony? Truth. God is Truth. How well-fitted, then, is music to glorify God, and to rejoice and satisfy the heart, which is created for truth, and can only find repose in truth! Hence it is, that St. Augustine declares the love of music, taken in a higher sense, to be a mark of predestination. In this sense, we, also, read that God "placed the Heavens in harmony."

Music is truth in consonance, and concord of sound and thought. This character of music—at least of music worthy of the name—accounts for its enlivening influence on the heart. The human voice is particularly endowed with this harmonious power of elevating the soul to God.

The Saints on earth were many times favored with hearing the singing of the Angels, and other celestial music. St. Bonaventure writes of St. Francis of Assisium, that, whilst listening to the music of an Angel, he fancied himself already in glory. Similar things we

read of the blessed Henry Suzo and of others. Why should we not suppose, that the Blessed, in Heaven, exercise the same power over sound, that they may give expression to their thoughts and affections? And, considering the vast number of the Elect assembled in the courts of Heaven, what a variety, intensity, and wonderful sublimity must characterize that heavenly music! Whilst endeavoring to realize to ourselves the ineffable charm of that mighty chorus of sweet sounds, do we not feel a foretaste of the rapturous delight, which animates the Saints in Heaven—and which we are one day to share with them?

If, by the alternations, and modifications, of eleven tones, in their different scales, and their different vocal or instrumental sounds, all the innumerable musical compositions are formed in such endless variety, and shall be formed, till the end of Time, and this, too, with such limited talents and imperfect instruments: how wonderful must be the unlimited display of the sweetness and power of sound, and the magnificence of the musical arrangements in Heaven?

It is true, we have hitherto heard, so to speak, of but few instruments; yet who can say what other kinds of incomparably sweeter music may exist, which shall never be invented on earth, and are known in Heaven; or, to speak more correctly, what other modes of musical expression shall the Blessed find for their joyful emotions? And, if the elasticity of the air, that surrounds our globe, be susceptible of such sweet and powerful resonance; who can imagine what wondrous reverberations the ether of the celestial regions can produce? Moreover, much depends on the feelings of the performer, and on the expression given by him to the music. What shall it be, when those great Saints and heavenly Spirits can infuse into their music all the intensity and sweetness of their own emotions of joy, thanksgiving, admiration, and love!

"Happy were I, and for ever happy," said St. Augustine, "if, after death, I were deemed worthy to hear the melody of those songs, which the blessed citizens of Heaven, and the legions of the celestial army, sing for ever in praise of the Eternal King!"

Nor is the praise of God alone the sole theme rehearsed by the Celestial Choirs: they celebrate the glorious achievements of men and Angels in the service of their common Lord, as well.

In her Office, in honor of St. Martin, the Church speaks of hymns, sung by the Saints and Angels, as he entered Heaven. In like manner, we read in Ecclesiasticus, that the whole Church Triumphant unites in honoring and praising the glorified servants of God. And must not such hymns, and such choirs, awaken in the Blessed the most enthusiastic thankfulness to God! After every such heavenly display of song and harmony, we may truly imagine, that the thunders of jubilant alleluias ascend through the heavenly vaults to the Throne of God: "Amen; Alleluia! honor, and glory, and benediction to Him that sitteth upon the Throne: He that created all things for the good and delight of them that are faithful unto Him, through Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen! Alleluia!"

Nay, more: since the grace and swiftness of the movements of a body, especially of a

glorified body, joined to the spirit and gracefulness of music, is true beauty, is a particular perfection, is harmony; this joy shall, therefore, have its reflecting counterpart in Heaven. How shall this be? Heaven alone must reveal. Visions of the Saints, however, like those of the Blessed Henry Suzo, point to this kind of joys in Heaven.

XVII.

THE PROCESSION AND CHOIR IN HEAVEN.

In stately, solemn, grand array,
  Proceeds the mighty spirit-host,
  In myriads to our reckoning lost,
As the Heavens only can display.
Of every tribe, of every tongue,
Lo! numbers upon numbers throng.
Harmonious, yet, their praises sound,
As prayer and thanks through space rebound,
All echoes of one godlike soul
Whom joy supreme and bliss control.

THE PROCESSION.

At a signal given by the chime of the heavenly bells, the joys of Heaven, in the Communion of Saints, resume the form of divine worship. I imagine that the Blessed assemble then to form those processions mentioned by St.

Theresa. When speaking of Heaven, she mentions one occasion on which she saw the blessed souls of the Company of Jesus, bearing white banners, and making a grand display in Heaven. Why should we not be permitted, to represent to ourselves similar manifestations, on the part of other Orders among the Blessed.

That religious processions tend to elevate, and exhilarate the pious soul, every one, who has assisted at them, can testify from actual experience. This is especially the case, when those processions move, through blooming fields and scenes of richest beauty, to a great church of pilgrimage, placed on the summit of some lofty hill whose sides are clad with smiling verdure, rejoicing in the brightness and freshness of balmy Spring. How soft and sweet is the far-off sound of the hymns and canticles sung by that pious band of pilgrims! How grandly wave the gorgeous banners in the bright sunshine, over the long files of pious worshipers, whose prayers and sacred songs make the air vocal with the solemn sounds of praise and adoration!

We all know the sublime effect of the Pro-

cession of Corpus Christi in every Catholic country throughout the world. What shall we think, then, of those processions in Heaven, at which Jesus and Mary assist unveiled, in all the splendor of their glory!

It was my privilege to witness, more than once, the Procession of Corpus Christi, at Vienna — which is, I think, only surpassed in grandeur by that of St. Peter's, in Rome. What a solemn sight it is, when, standing at the grand portal of the majestic cathedral of St. Stephen, you see all the banners of the Imperial capital, and those of the different communities and societies, the clergy of the whole city, the dignitaries of state, and finally, the Emperor himself, all in their richest robes, following the Blessed Sacrament into the Church! At the moment when the peal of the great organ announces the Benediction, how the heart swells with joyful emotion, and feels moved to sing aloud, with all that worshiping multitude: "Holy! Holy! Holy!" and, then, as thousands of voices join in the sublime chorus, how the mighty volume of grandest music rises on the perfumed

air, and, echoing through the lofty arches of the vaulted roof, ascends to Heaven on the wings of devotion. Then, indeed, you feel that you adore, in spirit and in truth, in the Communion of Saints.

From this magnificent display of terrestrial pomp, we may form some idea of the Procession in Heaven, as it moves through the streets of the New Jerusalem, and along the fragrant fields of Paradise, where Spring eternal reigns. The Procession, as it passes, sheds new light and glory on the varied scenes of heavenly beauty; the Saints sing hymns of praise and thanksgiving, and the Angels accompany them with their grand and solemn chorus.

The Procession is headed by the Holy Innocents, and it increases each moment in glory and magnificence.

There might we contemplate the different choirs of Virgins, Confessors, Religious, Martyrs, Priests, Bishops, Popes, Patriarchs, and Prophets, all in separate divisions, closed by the twelve Apostles, St. Ann, St. Joachim, St. John the Baptist, St. Joseph, and lastly, Jesus and Mary, in all the splendor of their

imperial majesty! After them come the different Orders of angelic Spirits, each one more radiant than the other, till their glory culminates in St. Michael, the prince and leader of the heavenly Host.

I often think of the glorious procession I beheld at Vienna, when the three different imperial guards, in their splendid gold and jewel-covered uniforms, brought up the rear, and closed the magnificent cortege. In Heaven—the holy Angels are the guards of Jesus and Mary.

THE CHOIR.

A radiant Cross marks the spot where the Procession has to move, and where the Blessed assemble, and where the common prayer of the heavenly choir begins.

Whoever has assisted at a solemn Divine office of choral prayer and choral song, in some Gothic abbey-church, must have felt the influence exercised on the heart by this sublime act of public worship by a religious community.

St. Ignatius found it expedient not to

introduce this species of Divine Service into his Society, in order to leave its members more free to attend to works of active charity, teaching, preaching, etc.; but we read in his Life, that it was a great sacrifice on his part, and that he often stood absorbed in God, as he leaned against the walls of the college, and listened to the far-off sounds of choral music which, softened by distance, came floating to his ear.

Why should not all the Saints taste the sweetness of this pious practice in Heaven, where they are no longer engaged in the care of souls, or the duties of active Christian charity?

Of old, there were in Egypt whole cities of convents, where, day and night, the sound of prayer and pious song was heard even in the streets.

We read in the Life of St. Felix, of Valois, that once, when the other brethren were all asleep, he entered the choir alone, at midnight, and found, in place of the Religious, Angels dressed in the habit of the Order, and, at their head, the Queen of Heaven, robed, in

like manner, in the habit of the Order. With this glorious company of choristers, St. Felix sang the praises of God, and went through the Divine Office. Who would not envy the joy and consolation which that great Saint must have felt, in this heavenly society, as he offered his prayers to God, through the mouth of Angels, yea, of the Queen of Angels.

In Heaven, every blessed soul enjoys this consolation, and in an infinitely higher degree, whilst speaking and singing the praises of God, not with a few Angels, but with all the heavenly choirs—with Mary, and with Jesus!

XVIII.

EFFUSIONS OF PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING IN HEAVEN.

Oh! what voice can ever chime
All our Father's care hath wrought
Through the lapse of viewless Time!
How He kept us in His thought,
How He guided all our ways,
By the light of Wisdom's rays—
Bade His erring children tend
To their Heaven-appointed end.
What this earth can not unfold,
In His Kingdom shall be told.

The choir ceases, and the effusions or addresses of praise and thanksgiving among the Saints begin.

I speak of this joy, yet not as though the Blessed required exhortation or instruction, one from another, to praise and serve God.

All that is past for them. They are all enlightened by the Lord Himself, whom they see, face to face, and, being all perfectly holy, they have no need of exhortation. I speak of this portion of Divine Service, only in so far as it is pleasant and consoling to a heart that loves God, to express its emotions of praise and thanksgiving in the presence of other rational creatures, and in so far as it is most agreeable to others to hear such sentiments expressed.

If it is true, that the one as well as the other is a real joy in God, then this joy, likewise, exists in Heaven—but in an infinitely more perfect manner. Undoubtedly, the means used, here on earth, to bring the erring children of men to the way of Salvation—the Word of God—must also have its representation in Heaven.

I have, therefore, only to prove, before I proceed to contemplate this joy of the Blessed, that it is truly a joy in God, to give public honor to Him, and to communicate the knowledge of Him to a listening multitude, and, on the other hand, that it is also a joy to

listen to such enthusiastic effusions from another, who is enlightened with the science of things Divine, and is inflamed with the love of God, and of every thing that is united with Him in love.

In regard to the person who speaks of God and heavenly things: every grateful and loving heart feels the impulse which David felt, when he invited all mankind: "Come and hear, all ye that fear God: and I will tell you what great things He hath done for my soul;" and, "for this shall every one that is holy pray to Thee." *

That the human heart is cheered and elevated by giving praise and honor to God, by proclaiming His glory, His goodness and His mercy is confirmed by innumerable examples in the Lives of the Saints. St. Francis Regis used to say: "I have only one passion, and that is, to preach and speak to others of heavenly things."

We read, moreover, in the Life of the blessed Michael of all Saints, that he used to fasten on

* Psalms, lxv, xxxi.

his shoulder a cross studded all over with sharp nails, so that, by pressing himself to that painful cross, he might not be ravished into ecstasy at the delight he felt in thinking and speaking of Divine things. Nor was blessed Michael the only one whose heart thus overflowed with ineffable joy in speaking of God, and announcing His holy Word. It was, in fact, the case with all the Saints, whose name he had assumed; and many of them have been seen rapt in ecstasy, whilst discoursing on God—nay, more, have been elevated from the ground, by the force of their spiritual delight.

But, apart from the Saints, whose lives are known on earth, every preacher, who announces the Word of God in a proper spirit, and every pious Christian, who discourses on Divine things—especially the attributes of God, and the guidance of His Divine Providence—feels a most sensible joy, when he imparts his sentiments to others, especially to a numerous audience, and when he thus contributes to make God's glory known, and His Name honored amongst men. Did

not St. Magdalen of Pazzi, one day, run to the belfry and ring the bells, in order to summon all mankind to praise and love God with her?

The royal Psalmist, in the name of all loving and grateful souls, invites, not only Angels and men, but all other creatures, in Heaven and on earth, and all the powers of nature, to praise the Lord with him.*

The Holy Scripture mentions many other servants of God, whose example proves, that the human heart feels this impulse of inviting others to join in giving honor and glory to God, and that it experiences a sweet consolation in expressing its sentiments of praise, love, gratitude and admiration before others, who also know and love God:

"Hear, O ye heavens, the things I speak: let the earth give ear to the words of my mouth. Let my doctrine gather as the rain, let my speech distill as the dew—because I will invoke the Name of the Lord: give ye magnificence to our God. The works of God

* Psalm, cxlviii.

are perfect, and all His ways are judgment God is faithful: He is just and right. Blessed art thou, Israel; who is like to thee, O people that art saved by the Lord." * So Moses expressed his feelings before the children of Israel in the desert; how would he have addressed them in the Land of Promise itself?

In the same way did the three young men, in the burning furnace of Babylon, rejoicing in God, invite all creatures to join in their praises. The Archangel Raphael, too, addressing Tobias and his son, exhorts them, and all mankind, in these words: "Bless ye the God of Heaven: give glory to Him in the sight of all that live: because He has shown mercy to you. For it is good to hide the secret of a king; but honorable to reveal and confess the works of God." Tobias himself, in accordance with this exhortation of the Archangel, exclaimed: "Bless ye the Lord, all His elect, keep days of joy, and give glory to Him!" And, raised in spirit to the contemplation of the heavenly Jerusalem, of

* Deuteronomy, xxxii, xxxiii.

which the earthly Jerusalem was a type, he adds: "Jerusalem, city of God, give glory to God for thy good things, and bless the God Eternal..... Thou shalt shine with a glorious light. Nations from afar shall come to thee: and shall bring gifts, and shall adore the Lord in thee, and shall esteem thy land as holy..... Blessed are all they that love thee, and that rejoice in thy peace..... and blessed are those that shall see thy glory. The Alleluia shall be sung in thy streets. Blessed be the Lord, who hath exalted thee; may He reign for ever and ever over thee." *

How powerfully, too, did this desire to announce publicly the wonderful works of God, and give honor to Him before the people, animate the heart of Judith, after she had gained that great victory, which has made her name famous throughout all time:

"And Judith, from afar off, cried to the watchmen upon the walls: 'Open the gates; for God is with us, who hath shown His power in Israel.' And all ran to meet her, from the

* Tobias, xii, xiii.

least even to the greatest—and, lighting up lights, they all gathered round about her. And she went up to a higher place, and commanded silence to be made; and when all had held their peace, Judith said: 'Praise ye the Lord our God, who hath not forsaken them that hope in Him. And by me, His handmaid, He hath fulfilled His mercy, which He promised to the house of Israel, and He hath killed the enemy of His people by my hand.' Then she brought forth the head of Holofernes out of the wallet, and showed it them, saying: 'Behold the head of Holofernes, whom God slew by the hand of a woman. But as the same Lord liveth, His Angel hath been my keeper both going hence and abiding there, and returning from thence hither: and the Lord hath not suffered me, His handmaid, to be defiled; but hath brought me back to you without pollution of sin, rejoicing for His victory, for my escape, and for your deliverance. Give all of you glory to Him, because He is good, because His mercy endureth for ever.' . . . . .

"And all the people said: 'So be it, so be it.'

"Then Judith sang this canticle to the Lord, saying: 'Begin ye to the Lord, with timbrels; sing ye to the Lord with cymbals; tune unto Him a new psalm; extol and call upon His Name. The Lord putteth an end to wars, the Lord is His Name..... Let us sing a hymn to the Lord; let us sing a new hymn to our God: O Adonai Lord, great art Thou, and glorious in Thy power..... Let all Thy creatures serve Thee; because Thou hast spoken, and they were made: Thou didst send forth Thy Spirit, and they were created..... They that fear Thee, shall be great with Thee in all things.'" *

And all the people joined their praise and thanksgiving with hers, and rejoiced in the sight of the Sanctuary, and gave honor to God, and to His heroic servant, Judith.

Who, indeed, can doubt that it was incomparably more pleasant and more gratifying to Judith, to announce thus publicly to the people the glorious victory she had gained, and, in union with them, to thank the God who had

* Judith, xiii–xvi.

given strength to her weak arm to slay their proud oppressor, than if she had praised Him in the solitude of her dwelling?

In like manner, every saved soul, having triumphed over the infernal tyrant, approaches the gates of Heaven as a conqueror, and cries aloud: "Open, ye gates of Heaven, because God is with me, and, by His power, I have crushed the head of Lucifer, the Holofernes of Hell, and vanquished all the armies of the infernal enemy!"

What rapturous joy it is for her, when, seated on the throne of her glory, she can relate to the listening multitude of the Blessed, the dangers she has encountered, the life-long struggle she has undergone, and the victory she has gained over the subtle and powerful enemy of man's salvation! There she is surrounded, not by a few thousands, the inhabitants of one city, but by all the angelic Spirits, and all the ransomed children of men of every age, since the birth of Time. No night or darkness there, no dim lights, placed at intervals, but the light of glory diffused throughout the Heavens: each particular Saint and

Angel shining brighter than the noon-day sun! There the glorious result of the victory gained endures, not simply for a few years, but for all eternity: nor does it involve only the deliverance of a city, but the deliverance of a soul from everlasting perdition, and thereby securing the everlasting possession of Heaven's kingdom!

This triumph of Judith, and her address to the people, also indicates the *subject* of that joyful effusion of praise and thanksgiving in Heaven. It is nothing else than the glorification of God: the expression of the praise, homage and admiration due to Him—the exaltation of His infinite perfections—His Wisdom, Omnipotence, Goodness, Mercy, Justice, Truth, and whatever other relations of the *infinite perfections* of God, to the *salvation* and *beatification* of His faithful servants, which may be discovered by the intellect of an all-enlightened citizen of Heaven.

The Blessed point out these relations from the experience of each particular soul, from their effects on individual lives, especially on the victory gained, by the assistance of the

Almighty and most merciful Lord, over all the infernal legions. This, with the wonderful ways whereby God's love conducted these His servants to the ineffable glory they now enjoy, in that blessed country, is, in Heaven, the theme of those jubilant allocutions, whereby they praise the Divine attributes and the ways through which God's Providence guided them in the path of salvation.

Let no one suppose, that I consider these heavenly effusions in the light of a rhetorical discourse. Not at all. I consider them to be, like the address of Judith, the joyful outpouring of a loving and grateful heart, exulting in the remembrance of the manifestation of Divine Power and Mercy for her own good and for that of others; therefore, I imagine the blessed soul to be, like Judith, transported with holy joy at the contemplation of these, such great mercies.

On the other hand, it is also certain, that the discourse of an enlightened, thankful and loving soul is equally pleasing to the ears of the faithful who hear it.

How great must have been the joy of Ozias,

Achior, and all the inhabitants of Bethulia, at hearing Judith: and with what rapturous enthusiasm must they have applauded her! Moreover, generally speaking, our hearts are consoled, as well as delighted, whilst listening to the announcement of heavenly truths, and to the effusions of a pious soul animated with the pure love of God.

I could wish to have heard St. Paul preaching! This was the second great desire of St. Augustine; and such, too, would be my wish. I wish I could have heard St. Paul, St. Bernard, St. Vincent Ferrier, St. Francis Xavier, or St. Francis de Sales!

Even infidels and hardened sinners are often seen, as it were, fascinated by the fervid eloquence of a preacher, whose heart is inflamed with the love of God, and animated by His holy Spirit. They will listen for hours to such a preacher, even without understanding the language in which he speaks. The expression of earnestness, conviction, truth and zeal, manifested in the looks and gestures of the preacher, captivates them, they know not why.

What pleasure it would be, then, to hear

many such speakers, giving utterance to the feelings of their hearts, one more distinguished than the other, for learning, holiness and zeal! To hear a St. Augustine, a St. Jerome, a St. Basil, a St. Athanasius, a St. Gregory of Nyssa, a St. Ambrose, a St. Bernard, a St. Thomas Aquinas, a St. Bonaventure preaching, one after the other, all treating on the same subject: oh! what delight! And then to hear other speakers specially distinguished for Divine love—a St. Francis of Assisium, a St. Dominic, a St. Ignatius, a St. Francis Xavier, a St. Alphonsus Liguori: oh! how rapturous!

Yet, here on earth, however great the learning, holiness and zeal of the speaker, there are many inconveniences and obstacles that weaken the effect of his discourse. This is but too well known to a preacher, when he has to speak often, and in many different places. Much of that which would increase the effect of a sermon, and leave a lasting impression, is not at his disposal. As for himself, he can not take the time necessary to reflect on those explanations and illustrations

that might place his argument in the most favorable light; perhaps, he is not fully prepared, or being so, his memory fails him; he is not in the proper frame of mind; he is either exhausted with fatigue, excessive heat, or some other cause; or he is disturbed by some unseasonable noise; all these, and many other causes, may operate to lessen, or even to destroy the effect of a sermon.

And, on the part of the hearers, the impediments and hindrances may be still more numerous. Perhaps, they do not sufficiently understand the preacher; they are not learned enough to follow his arguments; they do not hear his words distinctly, or are not disposed to listen; they are not comfortably seated, or, may be, they are distracted by the thoughts of domestic cares and troubles.

There is nothing of all this to diminish the effect of those heavenly entertainments. There no preparation is required for these praises; the speaker does but give expression to what he knows, and sees, as clearly as we see the sun in the heavens; and he freely pours forth the feelings wherewith his heart

is overflowing. If Christ said to His followers, on earth, "It shall not be you, but the Holy Ghost that shall speak through you," how much more truly shall this be the case in Heaven?

And, similarly, in Heaven, there is nothing in the hearers themselves to weaken or impede the effect of such communications. There, each understands the other so perfectly, as though it were himself that speaks. There, thought communicates with thought, and affection with affection, because all are united in God. There, neither cares, nor sickness, nor weariness, nor noise or distraction of any kind exist, every thing, on the contrary, tends to increase the effect of the sermon. There, the surpassing dignity and beauty of the speaker, who is either an Angel or a Saint; the multitude of listeners, each one exceeding the other in grandeur and in splendor, every eye radiant with joy, and fixed attentively on him who addresses them; the magnificence of the heavenly court, and the light of glory refulgent over all, every thing combines to form an audience such as earth can never bring together.

How immensely must all this contribute to the blissful effect of a heavenly discourse!

And who shall speak?

A ray of light, proceeding from the Heart of Jesus, indicates the Angel, or the Saint, who is to give expression to the sentiments of his heart before the assembled court of Heaven. This ray of Divine light animates the Blessed with a desire to speak, and empowers him, who is chosen for the occasion, to do it in a manner conformable to his wishes.

Let us imagine, that it is also permitted for that blessed soul to intone, like Judith, at the end of the effusion, a hymn of thanksgiving analagous to the sense and substance of that heavenly oration; and, that all the choirs of Angels, and all the glorified Saints, join the sublime chorus. What inconceivable joy must needs then animate the hearts of all the Blessed!

Moses, David, and the Prophets sang canticles of joy and praise; and every one, who is at all acquainted with the power of music, must know what pleasure it gives to the human heart to pour forth its feelings and affections in its spirit-stirring language.

If, now, a number of the Blessed should thus, in succession, entertain their happy companions by an allocution of this kind, and a canticle of joy; and if the Divine ray from the Heart of Jesus should always point to that Angel or Saint, the next highest in glory, and, consequently, the most richly endowed with Divine knowledge and Divine love: how wonderfully would the joys of the Blessed be increased?

Even though the hearer should stand higher in rank than the speaker, he, nevertheless, would hear the other with delight, because the words find a response in his own soul, and, in virtue of his greater capacity, produce in him a higher degree of satisfaction. The effect, thus produced, is like that of the wind sweeping over the strings of a harp—the sound is finer and fuller in proportion to the quality of the instrument. Or, to use another comparison, it is, in those celestial conferences, in some manner, as when many birds sing together in some leafy grove, and the trilling and whirring of one nightingale excites the others to put forth their sweetest notes.

Here, on earth, the hearer can not enter into, nor fully understand, the thoughts and feelings of him who speaks; though the one and the other inflame his heart much more than he is able to express in words. Neither does the speaker know what effect his words produce in the heart and soul of his hearers. If either of them knew what is passing in the other's mind, it would, doubtless, increase the effect of the discourse in both.

Now, in Heaven, there is not a thought, feeling, or affection that passes through the mind or heart of the one, that is not, at the same moment, communicated to all, thereby enlightening and rejoicing them, like the vivifying rays of the sun impart light and gladness to mortals here on earth.

In this way, therefore, another jubilee of joy is communicated to all the Blessed. It is the *honor* and *glory* conferred on each by all the Blessed, and by the Lord Himself.

It is the more necessary that we should mention this particular joy, because it satisfies one of the strongest desires of which the human heart is capable—a desire, in fact, stronger

than any other, and which, at times, paralyzes every other desire, as is proved by common experience.

How many persons are there not who would freely indulge in all manner of wickedness, —cupidity, hatred, revenge, voluptuous pleasures, and debauchery of every kind,—were they not restrained by the fear of forfeiting their honor and their good name? This thirst for honor often makes men sacrifice every comfort of life, nay, even life itself, as we see in the case of men who volunteer to fight in the service of their country—who are willing, if need be, to rush to the cannon's mouth, or mount the deadly breach; yea, the duelist challenges his fellow-man to meet him in mortal combat—to kill or to be killed—all to maintain what is called *honor*.

But this desire of the human heart may gain a high and holy satisfaction, when the honor we receive tends directly to the greater glory of God; or, rather when God Himself glorifies man with that glory which is essentially due to Him, according to the promise of

the Lord: "Whosoever shall glorify Me, him will I glorify.*

The glory of God is the end of the creation. If so, what could God promise greater, or more fit, to display His Divine Goodness and munificent liberality, than his making the Blessed partakers of His own glory? And that is precisely what he does. "To him that shall overcome, I will give to sit with Me in My throne: as I also have overcome, and am set down with My Father in His throne," † so Jesus Himself affirms.

When Judith ended her address to the people, Ozias, the prince of the people, said to her: "Blessed art thou, O daughter, by the Lord, the most high God; and blessed be the Lord who made Heaven and earth, because He hath magnified thy name, this day, that thy praise shall not depart out of the mouths of men, who shall be mindful of the power of the Lord for ever."

And Achior, too, said to her: "Blessed art thou, by thy God, in every tabernacle of

* I. Kings, ii: 30. † Apocalypse, iii: 21.

Jacob, for in every nation that shall hear thy name, the God of Israel shall be magnified on account of thee."

And Joachim himself, the high-priest, came down from Jerusalem to Bethulia, with all the priests, to see Judith, and they all blessed her with one voice, saying: "Thou art the glory of Jerusalem; thou art the joy of Israel; thou art the honor of our people: for thou hast done manfully, and thy hand hath been strengthened because thou hast loved chastity: therefore the hand of the Lord hath strengthened thee, and therefore thou shalt be blessed for ever."

And all the people said: "So be it; so be it..... And all the people rejoiced, with the women, and virgins, and young men playing on instruments and harps..... And Judith was made great in Bethulia, and she was most renowned in the land of Israel — and on festival-days she came forth with great glory."

How great, then, must be the eternal jubilee of glory and honor awaiting that blessed soul in Heaven, after her victory over the potent enemies of her salvation!

Even the pride of Haman did not carry him so far as to pretend, that the king should place him on his own throne; he was too well satisfied to sit upon one of his horses. God is infinitely more liberal. He permits His servants to share not only His beatitude, but even His glory!

It happened, one day, that St. Gertrude, being with her sisters in the choir, celebrating the Chapter, our blessed Lord was seen seated on the same chair with her. Who would not envy her that special mark of predilection? In Heaven, by a wonderful communication of glory, every blessed soul is seated with Him on the same throne of glory; because His glory is communicated to her, for which reason she gives to Him the honor due for that sublime participation in His bliss and glory.

If all the kings and princes on the earth, and all the dignitaries of the Church, the Pope himself, and all mankind, were, at one and the same moment, to offer their homage to one individual, would he not, necessarily, feel an overwhelming sense of happiness, and think himself well repaid for all the toils and

sufferings he might previously have undergone? In Heaven, all the princes of the angelic choirs, and all the crowned Saints of God, give honor to the ransomed hero, paying him all the honor due to his heroic achievements; and God Himself confirms the praise. What honor, what joy, what glory for a soul so highly favored!

Yet, all that we can imagine of the glorification of the Blessed, is immeasurably surpassed, when Mary, the Queen of Heaven—the true Judith, who, by her Immaculate Conception, crushed the head of the Holofernes of Hell—intones the Canticle of Thanksgiving; and when the Holy Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, in return, give honor to her in the presence of all the Saints and Angels.

This glorification of Mary is only surpassed by that of Jesus, the Incarnate Word. How wonderfully does His allocution affect all the Blessed! How it enlightens them! How it excites them to the praise of Him and His Divine Father, through the Holy Ghost! Who can imagine the dignity and majesty of

the sacred humanity of Jesus Christ glorified by the Holy Trinity, with which he is hypostatically united, by His personal union with the Second Divine Person!

Then does Jesus, the Law-giver of the New Testament, who by the Red Sea of His blood delivered the true children of Israel, and nourished them with the heavenly manna of His own flesh and blood, during their weary sojourn in the desert of this life—then does he, as Man, sing the Canticle of Praise and Thanksgiving in honor of His Father. Then, with Him, sing aloud the Redeemed, thanking and glorifying God for the wondrous mystery of the Incarnation, and magnifying the infinite merits of the sacred Humanity of Christ—those merits which He offered to His heavenly Father for the redemption of mankind, and for the greater glory and happiness of all the Angels and Saints throughout eternity.

When the Hebrews were delivered from the heavy yoke of the Egyptian tyrant, six hundred thousand men of the children of Israel sang the Canticle of Moses, whilst Miriam and all the women joined their voices to swell

the mighty chorus, and with harps and timbrels gave honor to the Lord who had dealt so mercifully with his people and brought them forth from the land of bondage. What a canticle was that!—never was such another heard, and never will it be heard again on earth.

In Heaven there are six hundred thousand myriads of voices that sing, with Jesus and Mary, giving praise to the most Holy Trinity, through Christ the Saviour, saying: "Let us sing to the Lord, for He is gloriously magnified. The Lord is my strength and my praise, and He is become, through Jesus Christ, salvation unto me: He is my God and Creator, my God and my Saviour: Almighty is His Name. Who is like to Thee, O Lord? In Thy mercy, Thou hast been a leader to the people whom Thou hast redeemed: and, in Thy strength and mercy, Thou hast carried them to Thy holy habitation. The Lord shall reign, and we with Him, for ever and ever! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!"

If this triumphant song rejoiced the soul, on her entrance into Heaven, as I observed, when speaking of the fulfillment of the prophecies,

how much greater is her joy, when she sings that canticle of victory, with Jesus and Mary, in the company of the Saints?

The thundering sound of the alleluias, which breaks, at intervals, on the magnificent chorus, makes the vaults of Heaven tremble with joy, and the depths of Hell with terror; whilst the mighty peal of music, increasing ever in power and strength, echoes and reëchoes from the farthest hights of Heaven. What a contrast in the feelings which are thus awakened in Heaven and in Hell! and how powerfully that very contrast increases the joy of the Blessed! *Such might not have been their lot*—it might have been far different; ay! even that of the reprobate, who gnash their teeth in renewed despair, as those heavenly alleluias shake the gloomy arches of their everlasting dungeon. "I might have been lost!" thinks the blessed soul, "but now I can never be lost—I have gained a glorious victory—I triumph for all eternity!" This canticle of joy raises her to the highest summit of bliss!

XIX.

THE MANSIONS AND THE BANQUET IN HEAVEN.

What are the gorgeous palaces of men,
Which art and pride vie to adorn,
To shame the beauties of the morn,
Whereat we gaze, and love to gaze again?
They are like dust upon the sea-lashed shore,
So oft we view the sparkling dome,
Outspread beneath the blissful home
Where joy God's chosen friends for evermore.

Jesus and Mary bless the Saints and Angels, and they return to their mansions.

They contemplate, with joyful wonder, the beauty and magnificence of those heavenly dwellings, adorned in a different way for each blessed soul, according to the particular degree of glory which distinguishes one from another. They also pass, at will, from one mansion to

another, and, as each Saint communicates to the other his own surpassing happiness and contentment—the joy is common to all—and they all exclaim, with hearts overflowing with gratitude: "How delightful are Thy dwellings, O Lord of virtues! My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God." "Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house, O Lord; they shall praise Thee for ever and ever."* "One day here with Thee is worth millions of years in those vain joys of the world, which we renounced because of our desire to reach these everlasting mansions!"

But greater still shall be the joy of those that have served God in the same vocation on earth, when they find themselves reunited for ever, around the Throne of the Almighty.

Every blessed soul knows and feels, that the others love her in God with an unbounded love, and each communicates to the other all her bliss, as to another self. Yes! it is one of the greatest joys of Heaven, that its blessed inhabitants are all one in *love*, because they are one in and through Jesus Christ our Lord!

* Psalm, lxxxiii.

We may add another joy to which Scripture often alludes, that is, the banquet or supper in Heaven.* Christ himself compares the felicity of the Saints to a *great banquet;* and, in the Apocalyse, the joy of Heaven is represented under the same figure: "Blessed are they that are called to the marriage-supper of the Lamb." †

Need we wonder at this, when we think of the manifold joys and pleasures of a royal supper, and the great splendor and magnificence displayed on such occasions? Hence, king Assuerus, "when he ruled over an hundred and twenty-seven provinces, and wished to show the riches and the glories of his kingdom, and the greatness and boasting of his power," could find no better, or more effectual means of doing so than to make a magnificent feast for all the princes and nobles of his kingdom. And he continued the banquet seven days longer, so that all the people of the imperial city might partake thereof.

To make this festival still more delightful,

* Luke, xiv. † Apocalypse, xix: 9.

he caused the place where it was to be held, to be decorated in the most sumptuous manner.

"It was," says the Holy Scripture, "the court of the garden, and of the wood which was planted by the care and hand of the king: and there were hung up on every side sky-colored, and green, and violet hangings, fastened with cords of silver and of purple, which were put into rings of ivory, and were held up with marble pillars. The couches, also, were of gold and silver, placed in order upon a floor paved with porphyry and white marble, which was embellished with painting of wonderful variety. And they that were invited drank from cups of gold, and the meats were brought in divers vessels, one after the other. And when the people came in to partake of that supper, at every table a prince was placed by the king, to attend to it." * Truly, a royal entertainment! But what is the splendor of this banquet compared with that which Christ, the King of Heaven and earth, gives, in his heavenly palace, and in the ever bloom

* Esther, i.

ing gardens of Paradise, to all the tribes and peoples whom He has saved?

Assuerus only invited the princes and grandees of his provinces, and the people of one city. At that marriage-feast in Heaven, we see assembled countless multitudes of the Blessed from all the nations of the earth, of every age, since the beginning of Time.

At the banquet of Assuerus, only some of the guests were princes and grandees: at the heavenly banquet all the guests are crowned kings and sharers in the power and glory of their Lord.

At the banquet of Assuerus, only some of the princes presided at the tables: in Heaven, all the Angels, those princes of the heavenly court, are in attendance, and Christ Himself directs all.

The banquet of Assuerus, although it lasted one hundred and eighty days, was given but once: that of Heaven shall be renewed for all eternity.

At the banquet of Assuerus, the people were surfeited: in Heaven, the hidden Manna,

of which the Apocalypse speaks, refreshes the Blessed with ever-increasing delight.

And, as regards the place where this heavenly banquet is given, how insignificant appears all that is said of the gorgeous preparations for the banquet of Assuerus, compared with the splendor of the heavenly banquet, given in the gardens of Paradise, adorned with all the glory, all the beauty, all the magnificence which the skill and power of an Omnipotent God has produced!

There, on royally-decorated couches, beneath the brilliant arches which sustain the Heavens, recline the Saints of all nations and of all times, headed by Jesus and by His gracious Mother, the heavenly Esther. The guardian Angels present to the blissful guests the Divine Manna, blessed by Christ Himself, which precious food is for their glorified bodies infinitely more than the tree of life, in the garden of Eden, could have been for man, even if he had not forfeited that Divine gift by his disobedience. It rejoices the taste of the Blessed with ineffable sweetness, and, if we may say so, invigorates the immortal life of the body.

Moreover, the guardian Angels present to the Blessed that new wine, of which Jesus Christ, at His last supper upon earth, said, that He would drink it with His Disciples in the kingdom of His Father.

At the same time, the choirs of Angels are heard singing, and playing alternately, their celestial music reëchoing grand and solemn through the Heavens; and the words they sing are hymns of praise to Christ, and of honor to man, exalted, beyond all other creatures, by the personal union of the God-Man with His Eternal Father.

And Christ, with His Blessed Mother, passes through the long files of the Saints, saluting each one with the kiss of peace, the seal of man's eternal union with Jesus and Mary in God.

In this manner may we contemplate the joys of the heavenly banquet, so often mentioned in Scripture under the name of a supper—a figure which indicates the serene repose of the eternal peace, which nothing can disturb for evermore.

XX.

RENEWAL OF THE HEAVENLY JOYS.

And yet, though wonders upon wonders rise:
As stars on stars astound the sight,
And new revealings spring to light;
So shines for aye the power of the All-Wise,
Where unrestrained His generous bounties flow
In ever-varied, boundless streams,
And bliss over all in radiance gleams
Complete, as each can wish, as each can know.

Christ, with all the Blessed, pronounces the thanksgiving, and again the chime of the heavenly bells is heard calling upon all to resume the celebration of the Easter-Festival in Heaven, and the solemn worship of God, mentioned above. All hasten to the throne of the Lamb. Opened, before Him, lies the sealed book of the joys, which shall be experienced in the continuation of the Easter cele-

bration. Then, with still greater fervor, if that be possible, after the other superabundance of joys has replenished them, all the Blessed sing aloud the Canticle of Praise: "Worthy art Thou, O Lord! to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: because Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God, in Thy blood; and hast made us to our God a kingdom and priests, and we shall reign." *

Now, whilst clouds of incense are wafted again to the Throne of the Almighty, the voice which sang the *Kyrie* is heard once more. The *Gloria* is again intoned, and all the mysteries of the heavenly Easter-Mass are renewed, amid all the fathomless bliss of the *communion* with God through Christ. Again, the *Ite Missa est* resounds through the Heavens; the Vespers are chanted a second time, the *Magnificat* and the *Te Deum* are pealed forth, in new strains of surpassing grandeur and majesty—and the Blessed enjoy again the ecstatic delight of their ineffable communion with the Angels and Saints. Then, walking forth,

* Apocalypse, v.

again through the spangled fields and blooming gardens of the heavenly Elysium, how astonished are they to see the change that has come over all! Beauties, unseen before, meet their eyes on every side, and new wonders challenge their admiration. These are the new and more glorious reflections of the Infinite Power and Infinite Beauty of God—whose delight it is to show Himself, in all the splendor of His attributes, to the happy souls He has gathered from the desert of earth, that they may share His beatitude for ever.

As a kaleidescope, when turned, shows entirely different forms of beauty, although nothing new has been added, so, by the power of the Almighty God, the Heavens go on, for ever assuming new and still more beautiful transfigurations. In confirmation of this, we might refer to what is said, in the Apocalypse, of that tree of life yielding its fruit every month; * and, also, to that promise of the Lord: "Behold, I make all things new." † Eternity itself can not exhaust the treasury of

* Apocalypse, xxii. † Apocalypse, xx.

God's inventive power. This He manifests by gladdening His blessed children with joys always new, which ravish their hearts with ever-increasing admiration of these new wonders of God's Infinite Power thus unceasingly beheld.

The harmonies of Heaven, ever falling with entrancing sweetness on the ears of the Blessed, the entertainments of their happy state—are all so many streams of ineffable satisfaction flowing without interruption into their hearts. "Oh! how great is the multitude of Thy sweetness, O Lord! which Thou hast hidden for them that fear Thee!" * "And blessed are they that dwell in Thy house, O Lord! they shall praise Thee for ever and ever." †

* Psalm, xxx: 20. † Psalm, lxxxiii: 5.

XXI.

HAPPY ETERNITY.

Oh! the bliss of ever longing—
  Longing for the things of God,
Whilst on us His gifts come thronging—
  Fill with raptures His abode!
There no vain, no fleeting pleasures
  Make the heart yearn for repose,
But from His everlasting treasures
  Ever new, a virtue flows,
Which overspreads the blessed mind,
Bids it long and, longing, find.

For ever and ever—without end! this constitutes the crowning joy of Heaven! Oh! to think of the import of that word—*Eternity!* Concerning it, St. Augustine said: "Say as much as you please: you say but little after all." Eternity, as some one has rightly observed, is a circle, the centre of which is EVER, and whose periphery is NEVER.

A still better illustration of Eternity was given by the Angel, of whom St. John the Evangelist speaks, when he says: "And I saw another mighty Angel come down from Heaven, and he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot upon the earth, and he cried with a loud voice, reëchoed by that of seven thunders, *that time shall be no longer!*" *

Consider now, dear Christian soul, if a bird were to wing its way hither from the sun, once in a thousand years, and take one particle of sand from this vast globe, how long, think you, should it take that bird to carry off all the high mountains, and every particle constituting the geological structure of this great earth? Yet, since all that time, the Blessed remain in their joys; and if, at the end of the period mentioned—that is to say, when the bird should have carried off the last particle of earth—the Blessed should have been resting in their joys, not one term of their Happy Eternity should have past away; because Eternity has *no* end—no limit!

* Apocalypse, x: 6.

Rejoice, then, O soul that love God! this is the Eternity that awaits you!

"The Angel placed his other foot on the sea." Now, consider, if a bird coming hither, every thousand years, from the sun, were to take, each time, one drop of water, that is to say, ten drops in ten thousand years, and so on, in succession; how long a time, do you think, must elapse before the bird should have taken away the last drop of water from the great ocean that girds the earth? Yet, all that time, the Blessed remain in the bliss of their beatitude; and when the waters that constitute three-fourths of this globe had been carried off, drop by drop, the Blessed should have been abiding in their joys, and not a drop of the streams of their blissful Eternity should have flowed away—for Eternity has no end!

Rejoice, then, Oh Christian soul! soul that love God! this is the Eternity for which you are destined!

Finally, the Angel whom St. John saw, held a book in his hand. Now, how few figures do suffice to represent a million!

Suppose, now, that you cover the entire

earth with figures, and the sun and all the stars of the solar system, yea, all the immeasurable dimensions of the starry firmament. Suppose these figures to mean years: dear Christian soul! can you imagine the end of all those years? And yet the time should come when the last hour of all those countless ages arrives. But when? Nevertheless, through all that time, the Blessed shall remain in their ineffable joy, and, when the last hour of those countless years is past, they shall be as they were at first, and not one hour of Eternity shall have passed away. Alleluia! such is the Eternity which awaits, in Heaven, the just made perfect—the ransomed children of God—the faithful doers of His Holy Will on earth!

Happy Eternity, thou hast no end—truly that's *Heaven!*

O Heaven, what ought I do to gain thee?!

XXII.

CONCLUSION—AND RESOLUTION.

The ills of life, its troubles and its cares,
Are priceless gifts, which every hour prepares
That we may turn them into gold,
Make them bear fruit an hundred fold.
With living Faith and Hope, thy kindly guides,
And Grace celestial ever nigh,
Plod on thy way, and gaze on high,
When courage fails thee, Man, or woe betides.
Though sad, and long, thou may'st here toil and roam,
At last, in joy, thou'lt reach thy destined Home.

And now, dear reader! brother or sister in Christ, can you say, after all you have heard, that man knows little of Heaven—that it is difficult to find matter for meditating on the joys of Heaven?

When you consider what I have said about Heaven, in these pages, will you not admit

the supposition that, in Heaven, myriads of years, nay, of ages, may pass away like so many hours—that the joys of Heaven never flag, never grow old, but, on the contrary, are ever renewed in all their primitive freshness?

Yet, a great doubt may present itself to your mind, and you will say: Father! is Heaven really such as you have described it? I answer: If you consider the order, or, if you choose, the form, wherein I have clothed my ideas on Heaven, you may easily observe, that what I have said is only the result of contemplation, seconding, or, as it were, following up the ideas of the reflecting mind, in unison with the spontaneous affections of a heart that loves God, and lives in the humble hope of one day seeing its desires satiated in God.

The poetic conception, the order, and arrangement of the ideas on the joys of Heaven, contained in this treatise, belong exclusively to the author; and it must not be supposed, that he would have these fruits of his own conceptions taken for any thing more that what they are — meditations on the joys of Heaven, and on the intimate connection which these

joys have with the spiritual joys of God's people on earth.

I might add, that the *mode* of these joys is entirely hidden from us, but not so their *character* or *species*. Heaven, as I repeatedly remarked, is the kingdom of Joy; consequently, as the different species of joys, I mentioned, are all real and divine, so the substance of these joys must be there, not in the manner and order here represented, but infinitely more blissful and more wonderful.

In this respect the words of the Apostle hold good: "No eye hath seen, nor ear hath heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what things God hath prepared for those that love and serve Him."

Finally, every joy which I have described is grounded on the truths of Faith. No soul, except a faith-possessing soul, could ever have thought or spoken of Heaven as I have done. Well, then, Faith shall, one day, be transformed into that which we now possess by Hope and Love.

Alleluia! Heaven is such as I have depicted it — yet, Alleluia! it is not so: since it is

infinitely more glorious and more beautiful than I could imagine. Yet, supposing that Heaven were only such as I have described it — with the addition of whatever the pious reader's imagination may suggest—is it not enough, and more than enough, to arouse and encourage us to act with inflexible determination; and, with God's gracious aid, to do whatsoever is necessary to obtain Heaven; nay more, to merit the highest possible degree of glory therein?

Let us, then, dear brethen, frequently—yea, daily and hourly—call to mind Heaven, and the happy Eternity that awaits the faithful servant of God; that thus we may avoid the danger of falling into luke-warmness, or of proving unfaithful to our good resolutions. This ever-present thought of Heaven will stir us up to labor, in the surest manner, to attain eternal glory in its highest degree; it will make us bear, patiently and cheerfully, the troubles and fatigues of this life, which are, after all, short and transitory.

The devout Eusebius Nieremberg, speaking of Heaven, forcibly places before our mind the

example of Cyrus the Great and his soldiers, in order to strengthen our resolution to gain, at every cost, the kingdom of Heaven, and bids us consider what men can and will do to acquire earthly riches or secure short-lived possessions.*

Cyrus, having resolved to invade the country of the Medes, commanded his Persians to meet him on a certain day, each one provided with a sharp ax. They did so. He ordered them to cut down a great wood, which task they accomplished by dint of toil and diligence; he, then, on the following day, invited them to a sumptuous banquet, and, in the hight of their enjoyment, he suddenly asked them, which they liked best, the previous day's hard labor or that day's feast. They all answered, unanimously, that they preferred that day's entertainment. He then showed them, that by making war upon the Medes an effeminate people, a little trouble should bring them to the enjoyment of incomparable pleasure, and to the possession of inestimable

* Institut., lib. i.

treasures. This was sufficient to induce the Persians to follow him, and to conquer the kingdom of the Medes. If this motive were sufficient to make a barbarous people prefer a doubtful reward, attended by certain and most perilous labor; why should not a certain reward, infinitely exceeding every labor, suffice to make us, Christians, throw ourselves with ardor into the glorious warfare which gains for us, not the perishable pleasures following an earthly conquest, but the imperishable joys of Heaven, and a share in the royal inheritance of Christ the Lord!

Let us frequently compare the eternal banquet of the other life, with the passing troubles of the present; the greatness of the kingdom of Heaven, with the insignificance of our services; the joys we are to experience in the company of all the Saints, with Jesus and Mary, and with all the Angels—the bliss of our union with them and with God Himself—and our own labors for Heaven will seem actual favors and privileges—our sufferings, repose, and the felicity of this earth, which

draws so many souls away from Heaven, misery and wretchedness!

As for the riches of this earth, which so often elude our grasp—they are, at best, full of dangers, accompanied with many cares, and can never secure their possessor against the attendant evils of mortal life. What, then, are they, compared with the riches of Heaven, which never decay, never can fail, and do secure the abundance of every good gift for all Eternity?

What are the honors of this life? In their nature they are essentially false, short and limited, and conferred by deceitful men. Can they be compared with those of Heaven, which are true, eternal—extended through all the Heavens, conferred by God Himself, and manifested before the whole assembly of the Blessed—men and Angels?

What are the transient pleasures of earth? they injure the health, consume our substance, and utterly degrade those that seek after them with inordinate craving. How could they be compared with the boundless joys of Heaven, which delight for ever their happy possessor?

All the delights of earth in comparison with those of Heaven, are like a drop of water compared with the boundless ocean.

What is the present life of misery, compared with that future life full of happiness and blessing? What are beauty and vigor, and all the other qualities of our poor, corruptible bodies, compared with those precious gifts of glory which the just shall enjoy after the Resurrection? We are now, alas! all rottenness and corruption, unwieldiness, uncleanness, infirmity, loathsomeness, and worms! In Heaven we shall be light, incorruption, splendor, purity, beauty, and immortality. Let us then, often compare the two states, which await man, and think of the difference between a body sickly, weak, pale and ghastly—or, after it has been some eight days in the grave, full of worms, corruption, and emitting an intolerable smell, and then behold the same body in glory, exceeding the sun in brightness, the Heavens in beauty, more odoriferous than the balmiest flowers of Spring.

Let us frequently compare the littleness of human knowledge, the weakness of memory,

and the perversity of our will, with the bliss of that state of enlightenment, where we shall know all, and shall will nothing but what is holy, and is willed by God Himself.

It is certain, that neither temporal evils, nor temporal goods, do bear any comparison with the things of Eternity, since, as the Apostle says, that which is momentary and light causes an eternal weight of glory.

We read that, in the beginning of the Civil War, which arose between the Roman Senate and the Gracchi, the Consul Opimius promised, by a public edict, that whosoever should bring him the head of Caius Gracchus should receive, as a reward, its weight in gold. This was deemed a most munificent reward; but God's promises hold out to us one infinitely greater and richer. For a trifling service, a little toil or trouble, cheerfully endured for His sake, He gives an eternal weight of glory. The Apostle says, not only that God Almighty gives and promises great weight for light merits, but adds, over and over, that it shall be *eternal*.

It would be a great happiness, indeed, were

we to receive, in exchange for our penances and voluntary labors, only an equal proportion of bliss, but one which should be eternal. Since, howsoever little it might be, it would be cheaply purchased, though it were but of equal value, so that the difference consisted in the duration only; as if for the toil of one day, we should receive a year of blissful repose. But what are all our years of labor in comparison with eternal rest? The same may be said of all we can do or suffer for Heaven—it is all as nothing when compared with the greatness of the promised reward.

The reward shall be *eternal!* What greater incentive can we require to make us do what God demands of us, in order to gain Heaven—yea, even should He bid us subdue and eradicate every evil passion of our nature? If we remain inactive, Septimuleius, who gained the reward proposed by Opimius, will be a reproach to us; for, when he had heard the aforesaid proclamation of the Consul, he was stopped by nothing, neither toil nor danger, till he had cut off the head of Gracchus, and obtained the promised prize.

Let us be, at least, as courageous and as persevering in our efforts to gain the kingdom of Heaven, by entirely subduing our own passions. And, since Heaven is so cheaply purchased, let us endeavor to increase our gain, and manifest no less desire for goods eternal than Septimuleius did for temporal riches. He, in order to make his reward still greater, filled with molten lead all the hollow parts of the dissevered head. Let us, in like manner, fill our light and transient works with pure intention and great love. Let us multiply and strengthen our desires for heavenly things, and infuse into every work, how trifling soever it may be, a strong will, and a vehement desire to purchase eternal happiness by temporal sufferings.

Nor is it necessary, with that intent, to do great exterior things; it suffices to perform well the daily duties of our state of life, and to make them become meritorious in the sight of Heaven, and available to our salvation. What an advantageous exchange is it for us to purchase Heaven with a cup of cold water—treasures of infinite value and endless duration, for things paltry, valueless and fleeting!

What sort of bargain would it be, to purchase a kingdom for a straw? Yet, such is the bargain of which I speak: for that which is worth little more than a straw, we may purchase the Kingdom of Heaven. It is certain that, compared with the glory of Heaven, all the joys and pleasures, riches and honors of this world, are of no more value than a straw. What should we think of the man, who, having a basket full of chips, should refuse to give one of them for a hundred weight of gold? Yet, this is precisely the folly of those who will not receive the goods of Heaven in exchange for those of earth, but, on the contrary, place their whole heart on the latter, and entirely despise the former!

Who is there that would refuse to purchase a precious jewel, offered to him, for a grain of sand — or a rich treasure for a handful of ashes? Or what man, being invited to a sumptuous entertainment, would reject the invitation, in order to eat an apple-paring picked up off the street? Well! we are all of us invited to the eternal banquet of the Lamb in Heaven, yet, we daily make choice of the

apple-paring, and things still more worthless, when compared with Heaven. Why will not men remember that, in comparison with the joys of eternal blessedness, all that this world has to offer is but trash—rubbish—illusion—vanity?

This was well understood by David, when he said to the Lord: "I did incline my heart to do Thy justifications." The heart of man is like a balance, inclining to whichever side has the most weight. And, as in the heart of David, the temporal weighed but little, and the eternal much; so, inclined by the eternal weight of glory destined for him, the fulfillment of the Law of God prevailed more than all the obstacles presented by carnal appetites and inclinations.

Such should be the case with us, also, and no danger, toil, sacrifice, pain or fatigue, ought to impede us in the pursuit of the one great end—the attaining of Heaven. It is well worth all we can do, and a thousand times more than we are able or called to do. It may cost us some struggles, some sacrifices, some endurance; yet, when we consider the

greatness of that joy and bliss prepared for us in the possession of the heavenly kingdom—which, in this book, we have but faintly portrayed—all the penances of St. Simon Stylites, the fasts of St. Romualdus, the poverty and destitution of St. Francis, and all the humiliations of St. Ignatius, are no more than would be the lifting of a straw from the ground to gain an earthly empire.

It may require some violence, on our part, to enter Heaven, but why should we not be as firm in our resolve, to acquire such fathomless joy for all eternity, as men are to gain worldly fame or riches, neither of which can give happiness, or secure peace, even for a short time?

We quoted above the indomitable resolution of only one Roman soldier; history is full of similar examples of heroism. Because David had it published in his army, that whoever would first set upon the Jebuseans, the most formidable of all his enemies, should be made a general: Joab hesitated not to expose his life to manifest danger, by cutting his way through bristling pikes and lances, in order to obtain the promised promotion.

Because King Saul announced, that he would give his daughter in marriage to him that fought and overcame Goliath — David rushed to the encounter.

Seneca wondered at what soldiers did and suffered for a thing so uncertain as an earthly kingdom, and this not for themselves, but for others. How much more, then, ought we to wonder, that the sufferings and labors of this life, by which we are to gain for ourselves the Kingdom of Heaven, should seem to us so very grievous!

What did not Jesbaham do, in order to advance the cause of David? * Seeing that the kingdom of David was at stake, he took such courage, that he set upon eight hundred men, and slew them in his fury. For the same kingdom, Eleazar, son of the Ahohite, fought with such indomitable courage, that he slew a vast number of the Philistines, continuing the battle till "his hand was weary, and grew stiff with the sword."

If these men fought with such desperate

* II. Kings, xxiii.

valor to preserve a kingdom for another, why should we not take courage, and labor valiantly to conquer the Kingdom of Heaven? yea, though we should thereby exhaust all our strength, and wear away life itself? What is life for, if not for gaining Heaven?

When David longed for some water from the cistern of Bethlehem, three of his valiant men burst through the camp of the Philistines, in order to gratify the king's desire. If men are willing to undergo such danger for another's momentary gratification, what should not we do for those eternal joys, which are to be our own, and for the Kingdom of Heaven, which holds out to us such immense honors, riches, and pleasures?

All that can be suffered in time is but little, when we have such a noble end in view. Semma, for the defense of a poor field sown with lentils, withstood, alone, the squadrons of the Philistines. Is it not worth our while, then, to fight, during this life, in defense of grace—which is the fruit of Christ's Passion—against our own unruly appetites, and to conquer our corrupt nature, that we may prepare

it for the perfection awaiting us in a future state?

But more than all, do not the busy, active lives of men, in this world, reproach us for tepidity, seeing that we do so little for Heaven, nay, seem to forget it altogether! If we were only to do for Heaven the tenth part of what every working-man does daily for a trifling sum of money—a few shillings—we should all, doubtless, be great Saints in Heaven!

In order to stir up in our minds an earnest longing for the bliss of Heaven, we can do nothing better than meditate frequently on that glory which is promised us. This will make every effort light, and every burden easy; it will induce us to serve God, wherever and whenever His Holy Will requires, by following His inspirations with the velocity of the bird.

This our Lord signified to the Prophet Ezechiel, by those four living creatures—so very different in their nature, yet all one in their employment—flying each with four wings, and with the rapidity of lightning. What could have given to the lion, which was

one of the four creatures, the meekness and gentleness of man, and the swiftness of the eagle? The Prophet explains it by saying, that the firmament and the Throne of Heaven were over them.

Brethren, if Heaven be in our thoughts, it will encourage us to bear all things—it will make men like unto the Angels, and bring under the control of reason, those that were as fierce and untamed as the lion; it will make those fly with four wings, who were, by nature, slow and heavy; and it will make those elevate themselves above transitory pleasures, who, before, were groveling on the earth, and looked no farther than its horizon. Then they will follow the inspirations of grace, even were it necessary to shed their blood.

Let us listen to what St. Vincent, the Martyr, said to Dacianus, the president, and see with what joy and patience he confessed his faith in the midst of torments. When they hoisted him upon the rack, the tyrant scoffingly demanded, where he then was. The Saint, with a smiling countenance, looked up

to that Heaven whither he was going, and replied: "I am aloft, whence I can despise thee, and all thy tortures." Being threatened with more cruel torments, he said: "Methinks, thou dost not threaten, but rather court me with the offer of what I desire with all the powers and faculties of my soul." And when they tore his flesh with hooks and pincers, and burned him with lighted torches, he cried out with great joy: "In vain thou weariest thyself, Dacianus! thou canst not devise any torment so great, that I am not willing to endure it." To a Christian, who sees Heaven approaching with all its unspeakable, everlasting joys, torments, undergone in the spirit of Faith, are a real refreshment. So it was with the glorious Martyr of Christ, St. Vincent.

We have another consoling and encouraging example in the martydom of Charles Spinola, the first martyr of the Society of Jesus, in Japan. He was placed within a circle of fire—for the Japanese desired not only to kill, but also to torture the Martyrs. They proposed to bind the holy priest to a pillar that stood in the midst of the fire. But he said,

there was no need of doing this, since he would stand in the fire, with his eyes fastened on that Heaven to which he was going. And so it was. The holy Martyr stood immovable, during two long hours, in that excruciating fire, which slowly wasted him, whilst his eyes remained, all that time, steadfastly fixed on Heaven, until his magnanimous soul was released, and winged its flight to find rest and comfort in the bosom of God. What a change was that for him! what a jubilee for himself, and for all the Blessed, who opened their shining ranks to receive him amid joyful acclamations! Who could not wish to have seen him raising his eyes to Heaven from his place of torture, and drawing from the thought of the joys, which there awaited him, that strength which made him not only forget his sufferings, but even love them—as so many instruments of approaching bliss? Would he have exchanged those torments for all the pleasures, all the riches, all the possessions this world could offer? Oh! what a refreshing breeze was this thought of Heaven to him! How it cooled the devouring heat of the flames, as it

did of old for the three holy youths of the Babylonian furnace! "In two hours—in one hour—in half an hour—in a quarter of an hour—I shall be in the endless glory of Heaven!" Oh ecstatic thought! what wonder that it gave peace to the Martyr's soul while his body was the prey of consuming flames!

No matter, then, how great soever may be the heat and violence of the flames of concupiscence, whereby the heart is assailed, let us look to Heaven, and consider the reward which there awaits us, and we shall stand firm, and arise victorious, to enter Heaven all the more joyfully for that the struggle was hard and violent.

Let us often say to ourselves, with true firmness and resolution: "Cost what it may, I must gain Heaven:" nothing in all this fleeting world shall deprive me of everlasting happiness!

Yes, though it cost me the light of my eyes, I must open them in the light of glory, and behold the everlasting goods which God has created in the land of the living!

Were it even to cost me the use of my hearing: I must, one day, hear the choirs of

joy in Heaven, and drink in the sweetness of celestial harmonies!

Were I forced to remain silent all the days of my life: I must, one day, sing, with all the Blessed in Heaven, the Canticle of Praise, which echoes for ever around The throne of God.

Were I to become lame and helpless for life, and were I to lose the use of all my senses: once in Heaven, I must be regaled with the fragrance of eternal Spring: my body must be endowed and adorned with the splendor, penetrability, swiftness and beatitude of glorified bodies.

Were I even obliged to renounce all social amusements here on earth: I must enter the joyful company of all the Angels and Saints. And though I were to become, for God's sake, the object of hatred and persecution, even of my nearest relatives, I must, one day, enter the bliss of the Elect in Heaven.

Whatever it may cost me—even were I to suffer all the torments, endured by all the Martyrs: I must, one day, see thee, Mary, the Mother of my God, and my Mother in Christ,

and enter into thy love and thy glory. I must, as thy saved and ransomed child, embrace thee, and thank thee, as my heart desires, in the company of all the Saints.

Whatever it may cost me—had I even to pass through the torments of Hell: I must, one day, see Thee, O my Jesus, in that glory, wherewith Thy heavenly Father hath glorified Thee, and enter into Thy love and bliss for ever. I must embrace Thee there, and thank Thee, reposing on Thy glorified and loving Heart, as my heart desires with a boundless desire: I must, as a redeemed soul, give honor, praise and thanks to Thee, in the company of all the Saints and Angels!

Whatever it may cost me, O my God and my all: I must come to Thee, O Author of my existence! I must see Thee, face to face, O my kind and most merciful Father! Why wouldst Thou have called me into existence, if I was never to see Thy face? Why wouldst Thou have given me a heart, that can never be satiated save in Thee alone, was I never to possess Thee, O Sovereign Good? If I can not see Thee, and love Thee, and live in Thee,

then, wert Thou to bestow on me all the joys and honors, and pleasures of this world, rather would I go back into that original nothing from which Thy Omnipotence and Goodness drew me forth! For how could my heart see all Thou hast given me, without seeing Thyself to thank and love Thee, according to the burning desire of that heart which, coming from Thee, must necessarily long to return to Thee as its final rest!

Thou, who knowest the secrets of hearts, knowest that I love Thee—love Thee incomparably more than I love myself; how, then, could I ever be happy without being wholly absorbed in Thee?

Whatever it may cost me, I must, one day, adore Thee with a worship worthy of Thee: thank Thee for Thy great glory, and for every manifestation of thine Infinite perfection, both in the order of nature and of Grace. I must praise Thee for ever and ever, with all the Cherubim and Seraphim—glorify, through our Lord Jesus Christ, the Infinite attributes of Thy Divine Existence, and thus make amends for the irreverence and neglect of so many of

Thy creatures, who did not glorify Thee, but, on the contrary, dishonored and disobeyed Thee. I must be for ever one with Thee, through Jesus Christ, as He with Thee and the Holy Ghost is One, and liveth and reigneth for all eternity. I must sing, in Thy presence, the Alleluia of a saved soul—Thy glorified image. Though all the powers of Hell, the world, and the flesh combine against me, I exclaim, with Thy servant, David: "With Thee, my God, I shall go over the walls!"

By myself, I am too weak, but with Thy assistance, Almighty God and Creator! I am strong and powerful, yea, invincible. I trust in Thee, O my God, my hope, even from my youth!

I am weak, but I trust in Thee, O my God! Thou art Almighty, and Thou wilt strengthen me in my struggle.

I am blind, and, too often, see not the ways of salvation, nor what I ought to do to save my soul, but I hope in Thee—Thou art the Infinite Wisdom, and Thou wilt enlighten me.

I am inconstant and irresolute, but I hope in Thee, my God! Thou art faithful, Thou wilt not forsake me!

I am a sinner, who have offended Thee, yet I hope in Thy Mercy, O my God! Thou art Infinite Mercy—I throw myself into Thine arms. O my Father! Thou wilt not cast me off!

I am lukewarm, imperfect, but I hope in Thee, my God! Thou art Infinite Holiness—Thou wilt increase in my heart the thirst for holiness, as Thou hast kindled in so many other hearts the holy flame of zeal!

I am wavering and divided between Thee and Thy creatures, but I hope in Thee, my God! Thou art the Truth, and Thou wilt strengthen in me the spirit of truth, that I may say, in all sincerity, "O my God, I am thine!"

I am bound by the cords of attachment to many created things, but I hope in Thee, my God! Thou art the Infinite Beauty, the Infinite Beatitude. Thou wilt increase in my heart the inspirations of Thy Grace, and let me taste, by union with me, in my prayers and contemplations, the sweetness of heavenly bliss prepared for me. Thou wilt increase and strengthen my ardent desire to possess Thee,

so that I may break asunder all the chains of my inordinate affection for all that is not Thyself.

I am filled with self-love—love myself too much, and Thee too little—but I hope in Thee, my God and my Lord! By the power of Thy Love, Thou wilt detach me from myself, that I may live entirely in Thee, and love myself only in Thee, and Thee in me!

I am nothing—Thou art all. I am dead—Thou art the Life of life. I hope in Thee, O my God and my Creator, Thou wilt confirm in me an humble and contrite spirit, which shall save my soul from the evil way; because I desire nothing more than to know Thy most holy Will, and, by fulfilling it faithfully, to glorify Thy holy Name. Thus shall Thy Word be accomplished in me: "Because he hath trusted in me, I shall deliver him, and shall gloriously glorify him." This word and this confession shall be in my dying heart, and on my dying lips, at the last moment of my life: "I have hoped in Thee, O my God, I shall never be confounded!"* And this hope

* Psalm, xxx: 2.

and confidence shall open to me the gates of Heaven!!

This hope and confidence in God shall become stronger and more efficacious in our souls, if we reflect how *near* Heaven is—how soon those ineffable joys may be ours, if we are sincere and earnest in our purpose to live for God alone. How soon a year passes away! how few are all the years of man's mortal life! how uncertain the duration of his pilgrimage upon earth!

St. Theresa was accustomed to rejoice, when she heard the clock strike, saying: "Thanks be to God, I am one hour nearer to Heaven!"

"And He said to me," says St. John, "The time is at hand. He that is just, let him be justified still, and he that is holy, let him be sanctified still." *

Yes, brethren, let us think oftener of Heaven than we have done before; let us consider well the celestial joys which shall never end, so that we may do more, than we have hitherto done, to gain Heaven, to merit a higher degree of glory there, and to win a more splendid crown.

* Apocalypse, xxii: 10.

"Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to render to every one according to his works."

Ye Saints of God, ye who have already conquered Heaven, how earnestly and how unceasingly ye thought of Heaven with all your vigor of Faith, Hope and Love! Therefore, your glory is now so great, and ye have reached Heaven so soon and so safely. We will follow your example with all the energy and determination of which we are capable—and we say with our whole heart: I *will*—I *must*—and I *shall* obtain Heaven.

Pray for us, Saints of God! our most dear brethren, that we may firmly tread the way ye trod on earth—the way of holiness and of mortification—that we too may reach Heaven, and rejoice with you for ever! Ye have already gained the haven of rest: we congratulate you. But, Oh! do not forget us, who are still tossed on the stormy ocean of life! Aid us with your prayers, that we may soon join your blessed company!

Jesus sent His Angel "to testify to you these things in the churches..... And the

Spirit and the Bride say: Come ..... And he that thirsteth, let him come: and he that will, let him take the water of life, gratis." *

This is what I have done. Urged by the thirst of my heart, I approached, in contemplation, the fountain of life, and drew, at will, from the waters of celestial bliss. I thought of Heaven, and spoke of Heaven, I hope, in the Spirit of God. My desire to know, and love, and enjoy Him in Heaven enabled me to do what I have done; and my heart found consolation and joy ineffable in treating of things so sublime and glorious. Whilst endeavoring to give my dear fellow-Christians a glimpse of the unrevealed glories of the heavenly palace, I have felt my own heart inspired with new fervor, and my hopes of Heaven strengthened. Whilst enlightening others, I have been myself enlightened with still brighter rays from the throne of Grace! Yes, Heaven is a glorious theme—more glorious than the heart of man can conceive, or the tongue of men or Angels describe. I have given you, pious

* Apocalypse, xxii: 16, 17.

soul! the means of meditating on the transcendent joys of that everlasting kingdom, and of thus exciting within yourself the desire of gaining it.

But the most important point is, that we make a good use of all these inspirations received from God, for the sanctification of our life, which, after all, is the only true means of gaining Heaven.

In conclusion, I say, with the Bride in the Apocalypse: "Come, Lord Jesus! come! Amen!"

THE END.

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AUTHOR

Easter In Heaven

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